



BHĀRĀTĪ MAHĀVIDYĀLAYA PUBLICATIONS  
RELIGION SERIES

No. 5

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ

BOOK II

# THE BHAGAVAD-GITA AND ITS BACKGROUND

PART I

THE POET OF THE GITĀ AND HIS ENVIRONMENTS

By

S. C. ROY, M.A. (LONDON) I.E.S.: Ex(Retired),  
*Ex-Director of Public Instruction, Assam.*



Published by  
SATIS CHANDRA SEAL, M.A., B.L.  
- Hon' General Secretary.  
THE BHĀRĀTĪ MAHĀVIDYĀLAYA  
170, Maniktala Street, Calcutta

1944

ALL RIGHTS OF REPRODUCTION  
AND TRANSLATION RESERVED

*Inland Price : Rs. 5/-*

*Foreign Price : 10 sh 6d.*

DEDICATED TO THE SACRED MEMORY  
OF  
SIR RAMKRISHNA GOPAL BHANDARKAR,  
WITH GRATEFUL REVERENCE.

## ESSENCE OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

1. "Whosoever there is decay of righteousness and prevalence of unrighteousness, I (the Supreme Self) create Myself. For the protection of the virtuous, for the elimination of the evil-doers and for the establishment of reign of right (or Kingdom of Heaven) I become manifest again and again". (G. IV. 7-8)

2. "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou takest as thy meal, whatsoever thou offerest by way of sacrifices, whatsoever thou distributest by way of charities, whatsoever thou practisest by way of austere penances, dedicate all these to Me (the Highest Self)" (G. IX. 27)

"Be My devotee, with mind fixed on Me, offering sacrifices for Me, Bow down to Me, Thus uniting the self with Me, devoted to Me, thou shalt come unto Me"

(G. IX. 34).

3. "God abides seated in the region of the heart of all beings,—making them move and go their round, as if they were mounted on a machine". (G. XVIII. 61)

4. "Abandon all other religions (*i.e.*, codes of rituals and ceremonies and outward observances) and come unto Me as thy sole Refuge". (G. XVIII. 66)

## A NOTE.

It is a genuine pleasure to place this book on the "Religious, Social, Moral and Intellectual or Philosophical Back-ground of the Bhagavad-Gītā" by Mr S C. Roy, M.A (Lond), I E S (Retd), Ex-Director of Public Instruction, Assam, before the public, interested in Indian Philosophy and Culture. The author is a keen, deep and enthusiastic student of Indian Philosophy, who has established his reputation by his valuable researches embodied in several other books already published. The preceding volume "The Bhagavad-Gītā and Modern Scholarship" by the author of this series of books on the Gītā was published by Messrs Luzac & Co, London, and it has been greatly appreciated all over the world by lay men and specialists alike

It was originally intended by Mr Roy, a life member and well-wisher of the Indian Research Institute to bring out this Vol as one of its publications But in the meantime the Bhāratī Mahāvidyālaya sponsored by the Indian Research Institute took up similar series of works Hence it was later on decided to include this Vol. in the new series of publications of the Bhāratī Mahāvidyālaya The activities of the Indian Research Institute in the fields of īndological research need no introduction But a few words here regarding the Bhāratī Mahāvidyālaya may not be out of place

The Bhāratī Mahāvidyālaya which has undertaken the publication of this book along with many others, was started nearly two and a half years ago with the ultimate object of being developed into one Aryan University in Bengal, and some progress has already been achieved in course of this short period It is really gratifying that besides starting a few schools and colleges of different types, organising different parisats (cultural bodies) for extensive researches into various fields of knowledge and culture, and developing different units of libraries, it has brought out in rapid succession twelve

## A NOTE

books embodying best types of researches which are distinct contributions to world thought and culture.

The Bhāratī Mahāvidyālaya is thankful to Mr. Roy for offering his book as a publication of its Religion series. We have no doubt that this work does complete justice to the elevated theme by the exhaustive nature of the treatment, originality of approach, and the lucidity of style. The author throws a flood of light on many difficult points in a calm and judicious spirit, embodying sweet reasonableness with profound learning and extensive research. Copious quotations and reproductions of the original texts, wherever necessary, enhance the value of the work.

A few words of excuse are needed for the long delay in bringing out the book which should have been brought out much earlier. The reasons are the uncertain supply of paper, rationing of lino metal, and ultimately gas restrictions, and also the delay caused by despatch of proofs. Two almost similar qualities of paper had to be used for the same reason, and the readers will not grudge it during such a critical period created by war conditions.

It is expected that this interesting and instructive work on a topic of universal and perennial interest will receive the warm welcome it deserves from the reading public, from all cultural institutions, and public libraries alike.

“Fālguni-Purnimā”  
9th March, 1944,  
1, Gour Laha Street,  
Calcutta.

S. C. SEAL

## PREFACE

The Bhagavad-Gītā, now an episode of the Great Epic of India named the “Mahābhārata”, is traditionally believed to have been actually reproduced verbatim from the conversations that took place between the Kaurava King Dhrtarāstra, who was blind, and his friend and Secretary, Sañjaya, who is said to have been specially gifted with supernatural vision and power of hearing for the purpose of vividly seeing from his seat in the royal court, all that happened in the theatre of war and distinctly listening every sound produced or word uttered in the battlefield of Kuruksetra, in order that he might be able to describe faithfully to the blind Kuru King the course of events as well as the minutest details of conversations therein from day to day during the conduct of the war (though what may be compared to a Radio Broadcasting agency of the modern age, as it were). The teachings of the Gītā are reported to be the outcome of a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa, the Charioter, Friend, Philosopher and Guide of the Pāndava Prince Arjuna and his disciple and comrade who was the prominent hero and warrior of the day (*viz.*, Arjuna himself). The latter was not only the best and noblest son and chief of the royal families of those days but also an able leader and organiser, on whose ability to fight and reputation as a brave conqueror of lands and a trusted friend and comrade of the great God-man Kṛṣṇa depended the fate of the Pāndava dynasty as well as of the Indian Empire of those times. The comprehensive and systematic courses of lessons on morality of the war and social customs and institutions

of the day, on philosophy of conduct based on the faith in future life and immortality of the soul, on the sublime truths of religion concerning the nature of Divinity and the relation between the Infinite and the finite Self and between God and the world, and the duties of man towards himself, towards his fellow-beings and towards the Indwelling Spirit of the universe, forming the burden of the teachings of the Gītā are supposed to have been delivered on the eve of the Great War of India in the field of Kuru-kṣetra, which is also regarded as the sacred ground for the dispensation of righteousness (Dharma-kṣetra). The occasion for the message or gospel of the Gītā was the temporary depression that had overwhelmed Arjuna at the very sight of the brothers' relations and kinsmen on both sides of the belligerent armies assembled in the battlefield, just when the signals for the commencement of the deadly war had already been sounded. Kṛṣṇa, the Charioteer and Counsellor, tries to lift up the cloud of depression from the mind of the gallant hero and inspires him with the lofty Idealism and high moral principles that should serve as worthy ends and purifying motives for a successful prosecution and consummation of the course of action already undertaken. He lays special emphasis on Karma-Yoga which unites the paths of Jñāna or wisdom (i.e., vision of Truth or the Ideal of Righteousness or the Moral Law), of Kṛita or Duty (i.e., disinterested action in obedience to the dictates of reason or conscience or the inner self—reflecting the Universal Will—without desire for fruits or consequences and regard

for self-interests and in entire subordination of the self individual to the Self Universal) and of *Bhakti* or loving devotion (*i.e.*, spirit of self-dedicating, self-surrendering faith in God, self-forgetting and self-renouncing love for God, and self-abnegating and self-sacrificing service of God, who is the Indwelling Spirit of all beings)

The results of the Kuru-ksetra war are too well-known to be repeated here but the Epic writers employed this grand theme for illustrating the principle of "*Yato Dharmastato Jayah*" (*i.e.*, "wherever is righteousness, there is bound to be victory"). The ultimate triumph of the virtuous and moral victory of the Right in the end may be said to be the basic foundation of man's faith in the moral government of the universe in every age and in every land, a faith which has ever sustained him in all hours of crisis and calamity, personal, social, national or international. As the *Gītā* itself says, "Where Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of Yoga, where Pārtha (Arjuna) is the warrior (holding his bow in the hand), there are sure to be good fortune, victory, prosperity and right (or morality).

Whether one believes in the historical foundation of the Epic narratives or not, whether one treats the heroic characters of the *Mahābhārata*, including Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, as historical figures or poetic fictions, and in the event of one's accepting the *Mahābhārata* story as authentic history, no matter what was the ultimate result of the Kuru-Pāndava battle in Kuruksetra or the fate of the Pāndavas and their enemies as well as of the royal houses that participated in that Great War of India, and

no matter what happened to the sturdy race of Yādavas and Vṛsnis or Sāttvatas, of whom Kṛṣṇa was believed to be the mighty and noble Chief, the immortal and life-giving doctrines of the Gītā remain to this day a perennial source of comfort and strength to the human soul in moments of its depression no less than in the normal, healthy and prosperous circumstances of its functioning; and we believe the value of this Song Celestial will abide and endure as an inexhaustible spring of eternal and universal truths and things of beauty that are joys for ever. The lessons of the Gita can never be wasted nor lost to the Indian mind. But it has yet to be recognised that the ultimate values and eternal verities contained therein far transcend in their range and application the local or temporal setting or garb in which the poem may have been placed or with which its dialogues may have been associated by the Editors of the Epic. Time has come when this Gospel of love and service and of peace and goodwill, which the Gītā undoubtedly is, should be accepted and appropriated for the whole of humanity, instead of confining its import or bearing for a particular sect of religion or school of philosophy and restricting its usefulness for the benefit of the people of a particular region of geography or period of history. The battle of Kuruksetra has indeed repeated itself in the history of India and in other countries of the world. Nay, it does ever repeat itself almost daily and even hourly or for the matter of that every moment in the inner life of every man irrespective of race or nationality. Have we not

ourselves witnessed two such great wars fought in Europe and America, and spreading like wild fire over the whole world within a period of 25 or 30 years of our lifetime ? Does not every domestic bereavement or social calamity, every political disturbance or economic mal-adjustment in our national and international affairs, facing us almost daily in these days, repeat the situation that confronted Arjuna ?

This Song Divine or this "Upanisad sung by the most Exalted and Holy Lord", as its name signifies, has been resorted to by millions of Hindus for inspiration and guidance during the last twenty-five centuries or more. It has been invested by ancient tradition and modern scholarship alike with the authority of a revealed scripture for all practical purposes,—an authority which is in no way less sacred than that of the Vedas for the Brāhmins, of the Bible for the Christians and of the Quoran for the Muslims. The Upanisadic origin and Vedāntic character of the Gītā are now recognised by most Indian commentators and Western scholars. The Bhāgavata, the Nārāyanīya, the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇaite forms of the Vaisnava religion as well as the Śāṅkarite, Rāmānujite, Mādhvāite, Nimbārkaite and other schools of the Vedānta system of philosophy have all claimed the Gītā as their own accredited guide-book on matters religious, ethical and metaphysical. The Buddhist and Christian scholars and writers of the East and the West have tried to read or discover in the tenets of the Gītā clear and distinct signs of the influence of Buddhist and Christian

doctrines respectively. But hardly have we realised as yet the supreme importance and value of the Bhagavad-Gītā as a science or art of Yoga, as a manual of Ethics, as a gospel of universal religion, as a non-sectarian devotional code of love and service, as the first attempt in the civilised world at a harmonious synthesis of pre-systematic philosophico-religious intuitions of the ancient sages of the most glorious period of Vedic culture and Upaniṣadic thought and as an anticipatory glimpse of all the Divine truths on moral and spiritual life sought by seekers of life Divine in the East and the West for subsequent ages.

It is therefore high time to undertake a critical-constructive and historical-comparative study of the Gītāic teachings and trace the history of the origin and evolution of the main stream of the Indian religious and philosophical thought, as it arose on the Himalayan heights of the Vedic hymns and Upanisadic speculations and enriched the plains of the land of five rivers, irrigating and fertilising in turn the Indus Valley, the Jumna Valley and the Gangetic culture-zones of Brāhmaṇism, Vaisnavism, Bhāgavatism and Buddhism in India, and as it influenced the world-currents of thought and culture after India's contact with the Christian and Muslim faiths and cultures down to our own times.

The series of "Interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gītā"—of which Book I. entitled "the Bhagavad-Gītā and Modern Scholarship" was published by Messers Luzac & Co., London, and Book II named "The Bhagavad-

*Gītā and Its Back-ground*" is now being presented by the Bhāratī Mahāvīdyālaya, sponsored by the Indian Research Institute, Calcutta, is intended to serve as a prolegomena to this huge undertaking. As mentioned in the "Author's Apology" of the first volume, the plan of the series was conceived about thirty years ago, when the author came across Garbe's German translation of the *Gītā*. By way of justification of the novel venture, the following considerations were urged by the author in Book I and may be repeated for the readers of the present volume with necessary modifications relevant to the occasion —

"(1) Since the publication of the Sacred Books of the East, edited by Max Muller, a new science of Indology, based on the mass of materials collected by a respectable army of pioneer workers in the vast field of Indian philosophy, religion, culture and antiquities, has developed, and several volumes of history of ancient Indian literature have been published. It appeared to the author that time was ripe for a new orientation of the study of Indian scriptures in the light of modern scholarship and in harmony with modern thought. The *Gītā* is almost like the Bible of the Hindus, and it is meet and proper that this sacred song Divine should receive the same critical and rational treatment in the hands of modern scholars that the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible have secured from generations of eminent theologians and ecclesiastical historians.

(2) The *Gītā* is at once the root and the flower and the fruit of the ancient Vedic and Upanisadic culture and of its harmony with non-Vedic faiths and non-Aryan practices. A historical-comparative and critical-constructive study of the *Gītā* and its relation to the Upanisads, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purānas*, and the systems of philosophy and religion that arose and developed in ancient India, is sure to throw a flood of light

on the history of Indian thought and culture in general and on the development of religious life and philosophical genius of the Hindus in particular.

(3) The present series is the first attempt at a comprehensive and systematic review of the results of researches on the Gītā, the Upaniṣads the Vaisnava scriptures and the Epic Mahābhārata, made during the last three quarters of a century by competent scholars of the west as well as by eminent Indian scholars.

(4) It has been the earnest endeavour of the writer to approach the subject of his study with an open mind without being biased or prejudiced in any way by the orthodox commentators of old nor influenced by the sectarian interpreters of the Gītā among the modern scholars so that an impartial and critical enquiry into the question of the origin and nature of the contents of the Gītā may yield to the students of the Gītā whatever is of permanent value and is worthy of universal acceptance.

The expansion of the original scheme into three or four connected volumes was anticipated in the following passages of the author's note in the first volume.—

"It was realised in course of the progress of the writing (of Book I) that the plan of the work could not be accomplished without a study of the age of the Gītā and the religious social and intellectual environments of the Poet-Philosopher who composed this Song Celestial. Again, the doubts of eminent scholars as regards the integrity of the text and genuine origin of its teachings from the root and soil of the Upaniṣads could not be finally disposed of without a separate treatment of the contents of the various chapters of this Bible of the Hindus, and without discovering the thread of unity among the apparently conflicting components of the poem, after a systematic interpretation of the 700 verses of the Gītā in the light of its central theme and essential spirit of the teachings of the Poet."

Books II and III were to deal with these subjects

"To prepare the ground for a systematic interpretation of the contents of the various chapters of the Gītā, it will be necessary to undertake a discussion of the religious, social, moral and intellectual atmosphere and environments, in the midst of which the poet-philosopher of the Gītā was born and brought up, and the age or the period of the religious and philosophical history of India in which this song celestial was composed. This will form the subject matter of the second volume to be named "The Bhāgavad-Gītā and Its Background."

Book II. in Part I on "The Poet of the Gītā and His Environments", as published now, is a partial realisation of the above plan, which requires for its accomplishment four more volumes at least. Book III thereof is devoted to a systematic exposition of the Gītā by way of a modern commentary, while Book IV will practically form Part II of Book II, dealing as it does with the Age of the Gītā and the Origin of the Bhāgavata Religion. The last two Books of the series will be devoted to a comparative study of the Philosophy and Religion of the Gītā, one of these (Book V) will discuss the relation of the Gītā to the principal works of Indian religion, philosophy, literature and Vedic-Brāhmaṇical, Vaiṣṇava-Bhāgavata and Buddhistic and post-Buddhistic cultures on the whole, while the other (Book VI.) will present a synthesis or harmony of faiths and cultures, based on the teachings of the Gītā as compared with those of Christianity and Islam. The next two volumes of the Series, *viz.*, Book III on "The Bhagavad-Gītā and Its Teachings—A Modern Commentary" and Book IV on "The Age of the Gītā and the Origin of the Bhāgavat Religion" will be dedicated to the sacred memory of Dwijendra Nath

PREFACE

Tagore and Brojendra Nath Seal respectively, for whose originality and scholarship I have the highest regard. A few more extracts are quoted below from the author's preface note in Book V. for indicating his debts of obligation :—

"The grateful thanks of the author are due to the late Prof. Paul Deussen and the late Sri Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, the two great Indologists ; their contributions to the study of ancient Indian philosophy and religion are of innumerable value and whose original researches in this field were the sources of inspiration for the main task of the author. The first two Books on the Gita in the present series are therefore dedicated to the sacred memory of these two pioneers in the science of Indology.

To Prof. A. Buriedale Keith the author is highly indebted for the valuable suggestions obtained, while the manuscript was still in its raw and fluid condition as it were and Prof. S. N. Das Gupta (who was then Principal of Sankali College, Calcutta) is also to be thanked sincerely for his scintillating support to the major conclusions of the author. Prof. B.C. Bhattacharya who had a reputation for vast erudition and sound and clear thinking and who also helped with his useful roles and suggestions after going through the manuscript could not see the work in its final form. I am equally indebted to the large number of Indian and European scholars whose works and articles I have consulted in preparing this book even though I have to differ from their view-points in many cases. Lastly I offer my grateful thanks to Dr. Betty Hermann for her kind favouring me with a Preface.

"In quoting the verses of the Gita in this and the coming volumes, the English translation of the poem made by the late Dr. Annie Besant in her pocket edition will generally be followed; but as her translation was not free from errors,

corrections and modifications will have to be made therein. The translations of Telang and Tattvabhushan will also be utilised occasionally."

The following quotation extracted from the preface of Dr Heimann, to whom I am also indebted for kindly suggesting the title of my Series as well as of the present volume, will give an idea of the scope of my undertaking:

"He (Mr Roy) makes an extensive research of all the former interpretations of Western and Indian scholars. In so doing, he supplies in his *Bhagavad-Gītā and Modern Scholarship*" an immanent history of Indology of the last centuries. Mr Roy propounds their interpretations and provides a critical survey of the views of scholars. Besides these historical researches Mr. Roy sets forth valuable dogmatic problems treated by those scholars. He refutes with good scientific reasons the assumed clash between pantheistic and theistic dogmas in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. no such strict distinction can be made between *Paramārtha* (pantheistic-cosmic) and *laukika* (theistic) views. Secondly Mr Roy's assertion that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* cannot be taken as a sectarian (*Bhāgavata*) Text is definitely convincing. Further, I would like specially to emphasise that Mr Roy hints to a most important philological—philosophical problem not generally faced—the fixed terms of the later Indian philosophical systems are to be found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in *statu nascendi*.

From all these above given reasons we may eagerly look forward to Mr Roy's intended series on the historical, literary, religious and philosophical problems involved in the *Bhagavad Gītā*".

For the rest I would refer the readers of this book to the extracts of Reviews and Opinions of the British, American and Indian Press on Book I of the series viz., "The *Bhāgavad-Gītā and Modern Scholarship*", inserted at the end of this volume (next to the Index), which is expected to serve as an introduction for the whole Series as well as a summary of the positions maintained by the

## PREFACE

author therein. Besides, the positive results of Book II. and the Poet's genius and originality, as well as the tasks and problems awaiting solution in the succeeding volumes will be found in Section XIII of this Book II.

I am so grateful to Mr S C. Seal, M A , B L., General Secretary, Indian Research Institute for his kind Note as a publisher of this volume and for his help in securing paper and seeing the book through the press in these days of enormous difficulties as related in his Note. The inevitable delay in the printing and publication of the volumes is regretted, but one has to remember that human endeavours are parts of the Divine dispensation and cosmic plans ever prevail over earthly enterprises. It is not without significance that just as the teachings of the Gītā were placed by the Epic Editors against the background of the Mahābhārata war, so is this critical-comparative study of the Gītā set against the background of a grim war-situation affecting the whole world. Let us bow to the Cosmic Designs of the Ruler of the universe, who regulates our earthly affairs. The author's labours will be amply repaid if a study of these volumes leads to the mutual appreciation and a better understanding of the common ideals and common foundations and meeting-grounds of all faiths and cultures and systems of philosophy and religion and thereby helps in bringing about the Fellowship in Love and Service and the Mission of Peace and Goodwill among the nations on earth—a task which the Poet of the Gītā undertook to fulfil by offering sublime and profound solutions for the age-long problems of human life and destiny.

While closing this Preface the author dedicates the whole work to the Supreme Self in spirit of the teachings of the Gītā, the essence whereof is quoted in the page facing the Publisher's Note.

February, 1944.  
Shillong,  
Santi Kutir,

S. C. ROY.

## BOOK II. THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AND ITS BACKGROUND.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS.

SECTION	PARAS.	PAGES.
A Note (By the Publisher)		v—vi
Preface ..		vii—xviii
Table of Contents		xix—xiv

### PART ONE THE POET OF THE GĪTĀ AND HIS ENVIRONMENTS.

#### CHAPTER I THE POET OF THE GĪTĀ AND THE RELIGIOUS ATMOSPHERE OF HIS AGE.

I.—Mutual Interaction between the Individual and His Environments	1—2	1—3
II.—The Task and the Problem before us	3	4—6
III.—Difficulty of Investigators Absence of Materials	4—7	6—12
IV.—Popular Modes of Worship and Religious Practices	8—19	12—24
(i) Sacrifices (ii) Penances (iii) Charity and other Practices (iv) God and gods (v) Symbolism and Idolatry (vi) Vedas		
V.—Higher Modes of Spiritual Culture	20—41	25—44
(i) Superiority of the Path of Wisdom—Its Various Branches—Religion and Philosophy (ii) Types of		

# CONTENTS

SECTION	PARAS.	PAGES.
Religious Enquiries and Disciplines—The Deeper Currents of The Age (iii) Renunciation and Action (iv) Theism and Pantheism (v) Hierarchy of Spiritual Disciplines (vi) Four Varieties of Seekers after God (vii) Religion of Devotion—Worship in Congregation (viii) Belief in the redeeming Grace and Inspiration of God (ix) Intellectual Elements of Religion (x) The highest Ideal—God-consciousness (xi) Chanting the Name of God (Nāmkirtan) (xii) Last Thoughts as determining the Future Fate (xiii) Yoga as a Religious Discipline and Ideal of Spiritual Life		
VI.—Some Popular Beliefs of the Times  (a) Belief in the Paths of Rebirth (b) Merits of Reading and Exounding Religious Texts—Resemblance to the Purānas and Upaniṣads	42—45	45—49
VII.—Truth and Error in Dr. Bhandarkar's Views	.. 46	49—51
VIII.—Conclusions of Chapter I.	47—49	51—54

# CONTENTS

SECTION		PARAS	PAGES.
<b>CHAPTER II SOCIAL SURROUNDINGS AND MORAL IDEAS OF THE POET</b>			
I.—Social and Moral Environment		50	55—56
II.—Dark Side of the Picture of Social Life .. ..		51—53	56—60
III.—Types of Family and Social Organisation .. ..		54—64	60—74
IV.—Four Stages of Life (Āśramas)		65—72	74—83
V.—Moral Ideas—Motives of Action —Standard of Moral Judgment		73—75	83—90
VI.—The Ideal of Perfect Man .		76—83	90—96
VII.—The Doctrine of three Gunas		84	96—98
VIII.—Ethics of the Gītā and Socrati- c Ethics Compared		85	99—100
IX.—Moral Psychology of the Gītā Modern Thought .		86— 89	101—105
X.—Highest State of Soul-Life— the Ideal or Rational Self ..		90— 91	105—107
XI.—Processes of Self-Culture—Prac- tice of Yoga .		92— 94	108—113
XII.—Classification of Mental and Moral Ideas		95— 99	114—118
XIII.—Conclusions of Chapter II		100—104	119—122
<b>CHAPTER III. THE POET OF THE GITA AND THE INTELLECTUAL ATMOSPHERE OF HIS AGE (THE POET'S LITERARY TRAINING AND PHILOSOPHI- CAL EQUIPMENT</b>			
I.—The Data or the Materials before us .		.. 105—109	128—

# CONTENTS

SECTION		PARAS	PAGES.
II.—Conception of Knowledge	(a) Supremacy of Wisdom Analysis of the Elements of Knowledge (c) The End of Knowledge	110—120	128—137
III—Metaphysics of the Soul	(a) Nature of the Soul—Its Relation to the Body—Pre-Existence and Survival (b) Soul & Matter	121—124	137—142
IV—God and the Soul—the Universal Self and the Individual Self		125—129	143—146
V.—Gradation of Elements in Mental Life—Psychological & Mental Physical Study of Mind		130—134	147—150
VI—Philosophy of Nature or Cosmology	(a) The World-Process—Its Origin, Evolution and Dissolution (b) The Conception of the World as related to God (c) Doctrine of Gunas	135—151	150—166
VII—Conception of God (Theology)	(a) Varieties of Manifestations and Gradations in Divine Nature (i) God as Personal and transcendent (Theism), (ii) God as Impersonal and Immanent (Pan-	152—167	167—185

# CONTENTS

SECTION		PARAS.	PAGES.
	theism , (ii) Panentheistic View of God as both Immanent and Transcendent (b) God as the Source and Root of All and the Essence of All (c) God represented in the form of the Universe and actively manifested in the World- Process (d) Poet's Genius and Ori- ginal Contribution (e) Poet's Valuation of two opposed systems of Thought and Culture		
VIII	—Relation of God to Man and the World .	168—175	185—195
IX	—God's Māyā & Yoga (Transcen- dental Powers) as related to Human Ignorance and Bondage	176—179	192—196
X	—Divisions in Divine Nature or Potencies .	180—182	197—202
XI	—Conception of the Future Life and the Suimum Bonum	183— 95	202—220
	(i) Heaven and Hell , (ii) Cycle of Rebirths , (iii) Ideas of the Highest Good—(a) Immortality and Freedom from Rebirths (b) Peace, Joy, Perfection (c) The Highest Goal as the Supreme Path and the Eternal Abode (d) Attain- ment of the Supreme Being—as (i)		

## CONTENTS

SECTION	PARAS	PAGES.
Everlasting Union with the Divine Self and Participation in the Divine Life : (ii) Union with Brahma or Absorption in the Absolute (Nirvāṇ)		
XII.—Conclusions of Chapter III.	196—210	220—241
(a) Use of the terms Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta in the Gītā		
(b) The Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Gītā (c) Reference to Puranic Myths and Legends (d) Similes and Metaphors in the Gītā		
(e) Upanisadic Character of the Gītā		
XIII.—Positive Results of Book II.	211—233	241—290
(a) The Poet of the Gītā and Western Thought (Similarities with the Conceptions of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant and others) (b) The Bhāgavata Origin of the Gītā—Truth and Error in Tilak's Views (c) Upanisadic Gītā and Epic or Vaisnava Gītā (d) The Poet's Genius and Original Contribution (e) Tasks and Problems Ahead.		
Errata	..	..
Index		291

# INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

## BOOK II

### THE BHAGAVAD-GITA AND ITS BACKGROUND

#### Part I The Poet of the Gita and His Environments

### CHAPTER I

*The Poet of the Gita and the Religious  
Atmosphere of His Age.*

#### SECTION I

### MUTUAL INTER-ACTION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS ENVIRONMENTS

It is possible to reconstruct, from a systematic arrangement of the materials supplied to us by the Poet in the various chapters of the Gītā, a picture of the religious, social and intellectual environments in the midst of which the Poet must have lived, and in response to which he must have employed his creative genius, intellectual resources and moral and spiritual experiences towards composing this sacred lay. As Herbert Spencer says, life is a continuous adjustment between the internal and external conditions, between the individual and his environments. It is by reference to the mutual action and reaction of these factors that we can best explain the genesis and the nature of an aesthetic-religious crea-

tion and poetic-philosophical synthesis like the Bhagavadgītā, just as we can judge the character of an individual or an organism from the nature of the soil and the climate and the geographical surroundings, in the midst of which he or it lives and grows.

2. We are thus interested in picturing before ourselves the condition of society and the stage of civilisation which gave birth to this Mastermind, moulded his character and determined his life-plan ; the range of intellectual speculations and practices within which his early-life received its training and discipline, and which gave the peculiar bent or direction to his talents and temperament, to his capacities and potentialities, to his thoughts and aspirations ; and lastly what is most important of all, the religious ideas and beliefs, the customs and traditions the spiritual outlook and ideal of his age, which suggested to him the problems that he undertook to solve which set before him the tasks that he felt himself called upon to fulfil, and which awakened in his soul the eternal quest that led him to seek for an answer that was not only to satisfy his own soul, but give abiding rest to and prepare the way of salvation for, millions of his fellow-beings through succeeding ages and generations. We are also tempted to enquire not only as to what kind of world the Poet of the Gītā lived in, what sort of social surroundings he found around himself and what was the nature of the moral, intellectual and religious environments to which he had to adapt himself, but also what were his own special contributions to the progress and civilisation

of his age, how well or ill he reacted on his own moral and social environments, what part he took in minimising the struggle for existence among his fellow-beings, what ideal of faith and culture he set up for himself and for others to remove the age-long doubts and unbeliefs, the cares and anxieties, the agonies and sufferings, the griefs and disappointments that have ever agitated the hearts of mortals and not often driven them in despair to renounce the world, turning their face against social and domestic duties and responsibilities.

As Bosanquet says, the world is the valley of soul-making and the human society rests on a perpetual readjustment of claims and counter-claims of the Individual and his environments. We cannot properly enter into the spirit of the teachings of the *Gītā* unless we are acquainted with the conception that the author of the poem had of the valley in which the soul of man is manufactured and of the society in which he is called upon to render services in return for the rights that he enjoys and in fulfilment of the obligations that are imposed by the community, or by himself, on himself. In other words, we have first of all to ascertain what lies in the background of the picture of life that is presented in our poem and study the presuppositions or assumptions under-lying the philosophical and religious world-view of the Poet.

---

## SECTION II

## THE TASK AND THE PROBLEM BEFORE US

3 Every science starts with certain data or given elements, which it takes for granted without further analysis, certain axioms and postulates which it assumes without proving and examining them, as they are regarded to be absolutely simple and self-evident. Our first duty is to find out the *data* or the assumptions of the *Gītā*, the existing theories and practices in the intellectual and moral and religious life of the people during the age in which the author of the poem lived and taught. It is only after we have succeeded in settling these preliminary points with regard to the environments of the poet and the *data* of his philosophical and religious teachings, that we can hope to be in a position to form a correct estimate of the *value* of his own contributions, by an accurate analysis of the *method* of his treatment of the various problems of his age, by arriving at a right determination of the attitude which he maintained towards the prevalent customs and traditions of his society and towards the moral and religious ideas and practices of his people. It is then and then alone that we can form a definite conclusion as to the true spirit underlying the religious teachings of the Bhagavad-*Gītā*, as to its philosophical conceptions of God, the soul and the world and their relation to each other, and as to its ethical and devotional teachings which form a necessary corollary to, and are indeed the

indispensable means to the attainment of, its religious and philosophical ideals

We shall have to trace the different directions along which the Poet moulded his environments and see how he enlarged and expanded, deepened and transformed the ideas and beliefs that prevailed in his age, how he idealised the realistic, and spiritualised the materialistic, and baptised the physical and naturalistic views of things in the light of the God-consciousness or beatific vision that was vouchsafed to him, how he tried to solve all the mysteries and enigmas of the world that puzzled and still puzzle human understanding, to remove all the contradictions and inconsistencies in the speculative life and to reconcile all the conflicting ideals and modes of discipline in the practical life of man by the philosopher's stone, as it were, that he acquired as a result of his moral and religious culture. Finally, as a result of all these enquiries, we shall discover the keystone of the whole structure of the poem and the foundation of the world-view of the Poet in an all-embracing, all-inclusive, all-harmonising spirit that sees the Universal in the individual, the Ideal in the real, the Conceptual in the nominal, and the Rational in what appears to be merely customary and traditional,—a spirit that has manifested itself in the Universalism, Liberalism and Catholicity of the *Gītā* and has characterised the best religious minds of India throughout the history of her spiritual life since the composition of the *Gītā*. The Poet of the *Gītā* will appear as a matter of fact to be the first creator of a new synthesis, and the inspired prophet

of a new harmony, in the field of ethical, philosophical and religious speculations and practices among the Hindus, and as such he may be rightly said to be the giver of a new vision, the author of a new law, the builder of a new system, the maker of a new epoch, and the father of a Renaissance in the moral and intellectual history of the Indian civilisation, and in the social and spiritual evolution of the Indian people.

---

### *SECTION III.*

#### DIFFICULTY OF INVESTIGATORS ABSENCE OF MATERIALS.

4 Unfortunately for India and for the world, there is no historical or biographical record from which we can gather any clue as to this immortal writer of the Divine Song, so that his name and ancestry, family and social traits, his personal habits and idiosyncracies, and in fact all the events and incidents of his personal life are more than unknown to us. Tradition ascribes the teachings of the *Gītā* to Kṛṣṇa, their communication through direct hearing or revelation to Sanjaya, and their recording in poetic form to Veda-Vyāsa, who is supposed to be the compiler of the Vedas and the author of the Epic Mahabharata as well. But no historical evidences can be adduced in favour of this traditional view, and even if we concede a slightly historical basis

for this story, it is difficult to say who and what the Kṛṣṇa and Veda-Vyāsa, associated with the Gītā and the Mahābhārata, were. For the name Kṛṣṇa has been engrafted on several personalities, and even Veda-Vyāsa has been known in the legends as Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyana or Kṛṣṇa the islander (i.e. born in an island). As regards Veda-Vyāsa, it is not only impossible to admit that it is one and the same person who was the compiler of the four Vedas, the author of the great Epic, the writer of 18 Purāṇas, the poet of the Gītā and the composer of the Brahmasūtras—all in one, but also that it was one and the same person who wrote the various Purāṇas and composed all the 18 Chapters of the Mahābhārata. I am inclined to believe that both the designations of *Kṛṣṇa* and *Veda-Vyāsa* were applied to a group of sages and poets of high order, who attained eminence or distinction in certain spheres of life, so that they were not proper names, but either family titles or names signifying attributes or adjectives (i.e. titles of distinction), as was the case, though in a reverse manner, with Vāsudeva, as held by Ramakṛṣṇa Gopal Bhāndārkar, Bankim Chandra, Tilak and other scholars)

5. Now, if an adequate knowledge of the environments of a poet is indispensable for a proper appreciation of the central theme or the underlying spirit of his poem, an intimate acquaintance with the life and personality of an author is equally necessary to a systematic study of his works and to a right understanding of the peculiar points of view, the special individual characteristics and the creative genius and originality of his

compositions In the absence of any historical materials or biographical records on the personality of our Poet we are thus placed at a distinct disadvantage as far as an illuminating exposition or correct elucidation of our text is concerned It is however interesting to note that this remarkable reticence on the part of our poet as regards his own life-history and the thorough lack of materials of an authentical character from other sources which might help us to identify our author, or ascertain his name and personality and also to fix the date of his birth and the nature of his environments, have always been the peculiar trait of all Indian poets and seers of antiquity, and consequently most, if not all, of the important works on Philosophy and Religion of the Hindus have suffered from the same fate of oblivion as regards their authorship

The name of an illustrious author like the Poet of the *Gītā*, who was not only a creative genius in the art of Poesy and an inspired Prophet announcing the beatific vision of the Universal form of the Godhead, but also the founder of a new school of Philosophy and a new system of Religion, the inaugurator of a new movement of social reform, the harbinger of a new message of peace on earth and good will among men, and the preacher of a new gospel of love of God and service of all living creatures,—the name of such a unique personality would have been immortalised in history and he would have been honoured as a great national hero, if not deified and worshipped as an incarnation of God, had he been born in any other country and had he be-

longed to any other race. But in India and in the land of Hindus alone has it been possible for a great genius to keep himself concealed behind his immortal Song Divine, to remain in oblivion for all these ages and to pass for a nameless and unknown (and perhaps for ever unknowable) Poet, not indeed unwept, unhonoured and unsung, but receiving on the contrary boundless homage of respect and devotion from generations of silent and speechless or passionately eloquent readers who have been charmed and elevated by the study of this sacred Poem and whose warm and deep appreciations have sometimes taken the form of sanctifying and adoring the Book itself as the very embodiment of whatever is sublime and beautiful and therefore Divine in the heart of man.

Nor need we feel surprised at this willing silence and self-imposed obliviscence of the author of the *Gītā*, if we understand His teachings aright, for is it not natural that the virtues of self-concealment and self-forgetfulness should be most successfully practised and exhibited by the Poet who has upheld the doctrine of disinterested and selfless action, free from all attachment and regard for consequences in the Ethics of the poem, who has given us a philosophy and a religion, according to which the individuality of man is to be merged in the Absolute, in the One Self behind all finite selves, in the only and truly Real which comprehends the totality of individuals which are unreal by themselves or mere appearances? If in the religious view of the *Gītā* there is no life and activity, not even separate exist-

ence allowed to the finite ego. if one life pervades the entire universe of being. if the whole of the Absolute acts in each and every part of the world and in each and every finite individual self if there is thus no distinction between mine and thine. if there is thus perfect equality or rather identity of all human beings as the metaphysics of the *Gītā* seems to imply. there can be no question of self-assertion. far less of self-glorification in the author of our poem. if he is to be consistent with his own philosophy and religion.

6 Whatever may be the extent of our ignorance with regard to the life of the Poet. there is one trait of character which we can reasonably ascribe to him from this very fact of his remaining *incognito* throughout the poem. viz that he was magnanimous enough to sacrifice his personal interest and private ends to the altar of duty and God, or in other words he was perfectly selfless and devoted to the over-individual ends and values and to the supra-personal Duty. with which he perfectly identified himself. It is this characteristic of entire self-effacement of himself for the glorification of the Absolute Spirit and admirable self-dedication to the immortal cause which he espoused in his Divine song, that may account for the studious avoidance on his part of all personal references in the poem And this characteristic it is which we find exhibited in the lives and works of most, if not all, Indian seers and sages, and which the Indian people in general have imbibed from their earliest ancestors as a glorious heritage of the past It is to this trait of character in the Hindu race, produced partly

by their philosophical conception of the identity of the individual and the Absolute, and partly by their religious spirit of self-annihilation, and their sense of nothingness of the transient human life and of the vanity of worldly pursuits, that we may attribute the charge that is rightly laid at the door of the Indian people by eminent scholars and historians, the charge viz of an utter lack of historical sense For, as Maxmuller says, History in the ordinary sense of the word is almost unknown in Indian Literature, and according to M Cousin, the eminent French Philosopher, this great deficiency is due, in no inconsiderable measure, to the doctrines propounded in the Bhagavadgītā itself \*

7 In the absence of any records of a biographical and historical character, we shall depend for our materials as regards the environments and the times of our Poet solely on what we can gather from an examination of the contents of the Gītā itself For, I think, a careful study of the seven hundred verses in the Gītā with all the allusions and references contained or implied therein will not only enable us to reconstruct the religious and social, moral and intellectual environments of the Poet, but also help us in determining the exact relation of our text with the Mahābhārata, the Purānas, the Upanisads and the systems of Philosophy that arose in India in the pre-Christian age We shall then be in a position to arrive at some definite conclu-

\*Quoted from Telang's Introduction to the English translation of the Gita in the S.B.E.

sions or suggestions that we have formulated in the last chapters (Part II) of this book as regards the age of the Gītā and its attitude towards Kṛṣṇa and the Bhāgavata cult. When we have gone through all these dark and dreary deserts of critical investigations unpleasant and uninteresting travails of cold-blooded dissections, there will dawn upon us the radiant light of the genius of our Poet as the resplendent glory of the morning sun, which will reveal the nature and character of the Divine Song as well as of the surroundings which gave birth to it.

A detailed study of the environments of the poet in its (1) religious (2) moral and social (3) intellectual aspects should form a preliminary to any critical or rational or systematic review of the Gītā, showing how the poet reacted on his environment and how he handled the current ideas and practices as well as the customs and traditions prevalent in his times—which supplied the ingredients of his religious teachings and the background of his philosophical doctrines.

---

#### SECTION IV.

##### POPULAR MODES OF WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

8 The religious environment of the poet can be imagined by reference to the various modes of spiritual culture and discipline that have been mentioned in the

Gītā and especially to his attitude towards ascetic practices and austere penances, towards sacrifices and gods of the Vedas. The most popular means of religious culture of the Hindus in those days were, as it is to this day, —Veda, Yajña, Tapas and Dánam i.e. study of Vedas or scriptures, performance of sacrifices, penances and charity (G VIII 28, G XI 48 & 53, G XVII 7, 11-28, G XVIII 3 5) But at the time the Gītā was composed, these modes of spiritual discipline were evidently relegated to a lower sphere, and a superior rank was given to the paths of wisdom (Jñána), of disinterested fulfilment of duty (Nískáma Karma-Yoga) and devotion or love (involving faith) towards God (Bhakti), as is evident from the whole trend of the doctrines of the Gītā, (Vide G IV 33-39, VI 14-15, 27-31, IX 29-32).

### (1) *Sacrifices*

9 From the long enumeration of the various kinds of sacrifices in the Gītā IV 24-33, we can form an idea of the modification that the Vedic institution of Yajna or sacrificial rites had undergone in those days. Thus we read of Brahmayajña (sacrifice offered to Brahma), Devayajña (sacrifice dedicated to gods), Samyama-yajña (sacrifice consisting of self-control), Indriya-Yajña (sacrifice relating to the senses), Ātmasamyama-yoga-yajña (sacrifice constituted by self-restraint as a means of uniting the soul with God), Dravyayajña (sacrifice relating to the material objects), Tapoyajña (that consisting in penances), Yogayajña (that consisting in Yoga or concentration on God's essence), Prána yajña and Apána yajña

(sacrifices relating to vital breaths), Japayajña (sacrifice consisting in repeated uttering of the names of God), Jnána-yajña (sacrifice consisting of wisdom)—the last-mentioned being the best of sacrifices. The very fact that all different modes of religious practices and moral disciplines are here associated with one or the other variety of sacrifices is a sufficient indication of the strong hold and extensive influence that this Vedic institution had over the popular faith and imagination in those times. But there are also signs not wanting in the Gītā itself that the external forms and materials of the sacrificial ceremonies had begun to be internalised and spiritualised by the up-holders of this Vedic tradition, with the growth of more advanced and liberal ideas of religion and with the awakening of a deeper consciousness of man's spiritual relations with God. This is not only apparent from the names of sacrifices being freely applied to wisdom, penances and concentration, to self-control and even to the regulation of vital processes and sense experiences, but also from the express denunciation of Vedic rites, which were performed on hedonistic motives and which aimed at heavenly rewards and propitiation of gods, and from the delegation of all such sacrifices to a lower grade of religious culture than wisdom and devotion to God (Vide G II 42-44, VIII 28, IX. 14-21, 24-25, XI. 48).

10 It is important to note that the customary and traditional modes of sacrificial performances had in course of time degenerated into mere routine of meaningless rites, done by wicked people more for show than

for their welfare, and what was more objectionable, done against scriptural ordinances (G XVI 15, 17) Even the objects of worship, to whom sacrificial offerings were dedicated, were not always and necessarily the gods of the Vedas, but Yaksas, Rāksasas, and other evil spirits and demonical or devilish agencies (including ghosts etc) (G XVII 4) The Poet of the Gītā, born in a religious atmosphere, saturated with smokes from sacrificial fires, sought to avoid the extremes of utterly rejecting and tacitly accepting the sacrificial modes of worship, and followed the golden mean of retaining the underlying essence of the Vedic tradition, and giving it a higher spiritual significance For, the Gītā not only enjoins sacrificial performances in the right manner with the right spirit and for the right object, but upholds knowledge of God (Jnāna-yajñā) and singing the praise of God' (Japayajñā) as the highest modes sacrifice (G IV 33, X. 25)

### (11) *Penances*

11 Ascetic practices and austere penances were equally predominant in the religious environment of the Poet of the Gītā Those who resorted to self-torture and physical mortification are condemned by the poet in unambiguous terms and are characterised as the possessors of devilish nature (G XVII 5-6) But penances consisting in proper disciplining of the body, the speech, and the mind are tolerated and classified under three heads, the best, tolerable and the lowest (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas), although it is admitted that

God is not to be seen by means of such rigid disciplines but by devotion and love (G XVII 14-19, 23-25, G XVIII 3-7, G XI 47-48, 52-54)

(iii) *Charity and other Practices*

As in the case of sacrifices and penances, so in the case of charity and almsgiving the Poet does not merely follow the beaten track and give premium to the traditional practices and prevalent customs, but rather boldly and unhesitatingly passes his moral judgment on them and holds before his society and the posterity a higher ideal of performing the same religious duties without any attachment or passion and without any desire for the consequences, and hence there followed a three-fold division or graduated scale of these religious disciplines according to their qualities (G XVII 7, 20-22). It is to be observed that the Gītā indicates an advance towards a higher plane beyond the prevalent modes of these religious practices, in that its classification is not only based on the manner in which they are undertaken and the spirit in which they are to be resorted to, but also on the objects towards which these are directed and the ends which are fulfilled by them. For example, the sacrifices are classified once according to faith or reverence (Śraddhā in the object of worship, e.g. gods, demons or spirits) as in Gītā XVII 4, and again according to the motives and desires for consequences which actuate the performer (Gītā XVII 11-13). So with penances, which are once classified according as they are physical, vocal (relating to words or speech)

and mental, and again, as usual, according to the three gunas or qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* (G. XVII. 14-16, 17-19) Then again all these acts of sacrifices, charity and penance are divided into good (*sat*) and bad (*asat*), according as they are done with faith (Śradhdhá) or without faith (G XVII 27-28), and the former again are said to be performed by the *Brahmavādis* (seekers after the attainment of Brahma) with the *mantra* or Divine formula of *Om*, and by the seekers of *Moksha* or salvation with the divine symbol of *Tat*. (G. XVII 24-25)

13 These various orders or grades of popular religious practices, mentioned in the Gītā, give us a faint glimpse of the spiritual atmosphere in which the poet was breathing, and the customs and traditions of the contemporary religious life to which he had to adapt himself. We can easily imagine how an earnest seeker after a loftier and more idealistic view of religious life and spiritual culture had to struggle against the existing tendencies and practices of his environments, sometimes assimilating them, sometimes transforming them, now enlarging and expanding, and again liberalising and deepening them, fearlessly setting his face against some, and adopting a more compromising and conservative attitude towards others.

#### (iv) God and gods

14 Now turning to the gods which along with the Vedas have from times immemorial received unflinching worship and devotion and commanded unwavering faith and reverence from the religious minds of India, we find

in the Gītā unmistakable signs of a searching of the heart, a genuine inclination or tendency to doubt, and spirit of scepticism as regards their existence. nature and authority. We may confidently assert that the age of the Gītā was an age of spiritual awakening, an age of intellectual Enlightenment and free thinking. during which the Indian mind shook to its foundation the Vedic tradition and worship of many gods and sought to rise to a higher level of mono-theistic worship of one God in spirit and in truth The very conception of gods as helping men and receiving help from men in return, implied in the verse G. III. 11-12 creates an impression that gods were no longer exalted high above mortals of the earth, holding sway over the destiny of the latter and demanding unconditional homage and obedience in every sphere of mundane affairs This impression is strengthened and confirmed by the explicit depreciation of the worship of gods, and the condemnation of those ignorant people who led by desire which robs them of knowledge and under the rule of their lower nature, worship other gods beside the one God, as we find in the verses G VII 20, 23. A sharp and clear contrast is made between one supreme God and the various gods, and while the former is exalted above all and is made to grant faith to the believer in other gods, the latter are simply tolerated with the remark that their worshippers go to heaven and dwell with those gods only for a short period after which they come back to the earth. In other words. the worshippers of other gods are considered to be inferior to the devotees of one God, who

alone receives whatever is offered to other gods, so that lower religious exercises directed towards the latter are also conceived in a way as worshipping God, though indirectly and irregularly (*Gītā IX* 20-21, 23-26). The same truth is expressed also in *Gītā X* 2, 14 and *Gītā XI* 6, 15, where God's transcendent nature is said to be unknown to gods, the latter are counted as Vibhuties or manifestations of God, and as such are seen in the body of God. Gods, again, are also desirous of seeing the Universal form of God and are like men subject to the three gunas (*G XI* 52 and *XVIII* 40).

15 A careful study of these references to gods in the *Gītā* and of the position that is assigned to them will convince one that the Poet was living in an age when the forces of monotheistic ideas and of devotional fervour were strong enough to assert themselves and to make their influences felt in the religious circles of India, when the worship of many gods was slowly but surely declining and giving way to the spiritual adoration of one God, when men were not satisfied with the round of heavenly bliss and earthly suffering that fell to the lot of those who addressed themselves to various gods in the form of presiding deities of Nature or the shining ones living in a celestial abode. The poet was wise enough to recognise in these tendencies and forces of his religious environment a splendid opportunity for promoting a type of spiritual culture founded on his monotheistic ideal, and consisting in the true knowledge and disinterested service of the one God and single-minded devotion and love to Him. But at the same time his conservative in-

stincts did not allow him to break away from the traditional religious beliefs and practices altogether and to dispense with the rites and ceremonies relating to the worship of gods, although he gave the latter a lower and subordinate place in his religious system.

(v). *Symbolism and Idolatry.*

16. There are some verses in the Gītā which seem to have an idolatrous tinge and remind us of the worship of image of Divinity, which was introduced in the latter-day Brāhmaṇism and forms a prominent feature of the sectarian Hinduism of modern times e.g. the verses G. XI. 10. 11. 15-17. 20-32. delineate the universal form of God, embracing in His Infinite Body all the gods and spirits as its limbs. This is indeed one of the most wonderful strokes of poetic imagination and creative synthesis that we find in the Gītā, and it is the beauty and sublimity of this conception that has elevated our poet to the rank of a first rate originating Genius. We need not be surprised if this concrete picture of an abstract Universal, this religious embodiment of an ethical Ideal and a philosophical Truth this finite and temporal manifestation of what is in its nature and essence Infinite and Eternal this sensible and visible incarnation of an invisible and supersensible Being this manifold becoming in a finite-Infinite, concrete-Universal form of the unchanging and unitary Reality, that we find in the Gītā (Chapter XI.), was the first and the most successful beginning of that symbolical mode of representing an Idea and mythological way of stating a historical fact or a

scientific law, which has ever since characterised the religious writings (esp the Epic and Purana literature) of India, and which had, I believe, prepared the way for idolatrous rites and worship of images of gods and goddesses in the Hindu temples. This symbolism in the Gītā is however not to be identified with the popular idolatry of modern cults of Brāhmaṇism. The worship of many gods with leaves, flowers, water and other offerings prevailed no doubt in the religious environment of our Poet, as is indicated by the verses G IX 25, 26, but there is nothing to justify the assumption of practices of idolatrous worship in the Indian society of that age, although, as we have just remarked, the concrete representation of the universe as the body of God in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā may have suggested to the poets and the priests of the later ages the Purānic exaggeration on the one hand and idolatrous excesses on the other.

#### (vi) *Vedas*

17 Similarly with the Vedas. We can infer from the large number of passages in which the Vedas are expressly mentioned by the poet of the Gītā that these holy writings were still regarded by the masses of the Indian people as the invaluable sources of religious knowledge and the unquestionable authority in the regulation of affairs relating to practical life, and as such they were upheld by the priestly classes as the foundation and mainstay of the customs and traditions of society. For example, the study of the Vedas was enjoined as a sacred duty,

included in the list of virtues required to be practised by the house-holder and also prescribed as a mode of penance in the verses G XVI 1 and XVII 15 where *swādhyāya* or study of the Vedas is mentioned as one of the godly qualities, and God is even called the knower of the Vedas, the author of Vedānta, and the only object knowable by the Vedas, and his name Purusottama (the highest person or the supreme spirit) is said to occur in the Vedas (Gītā XV 15, 18). But when we examine all the references to Vedas in the Gītā, we are struck by the manner in which majority of them denounced the Vedic rites and sacrifices. It may be noted that the teachings of our poet are usually characterised by a conservative and tolerant attitude, and they do not offend as a rule the religious sensibility of any men, far less disturb the existing faith or upset the current practices of the ignorant multitude or common folk of this country.

18. The fact that notwithstanding his respect for popular customs and traditions our author has thought it fit to raise his voice of protest against the Vedic modes of religious observances in no uncertain and ambiguous tone, and to condemn most emphatically the adherents of the Brāhmanical cult, based on the Vedic authority, is in itself a sufficient ground for believing that the Vedic rites had in those times degenerated into mere mechanical and lifeless performances, into dull, dreary, soul-killing formalities, in which self-centred and pleasure-seeking individuals might have indulged under the guidance of interested priests with the object of securing a place in Heaven, but in which the cultured and enlight-

ened Indians had neither faith nor taste, and which were therefore already on the way to being gradually pushed in the back-ground and thrown over-board from the domain of spiritual culture To quote, for instance, a few verses from the Gītā, we find in the second chapter five consecutive verses (G II 42-46) harping on the same string and showing the utter uselessness and even foolishness of following the Vedas for a wise man They tell us, "Flowery speech is uttered by the foolish, rejoicing in the letter of the Vedas, saying there is naught but this , with desire for self, with heaven for goal, they offer birth as the fruit of action, and prescribe many and various ceremonies for the attainment of pleasure and lordship for them who cling to pleasure and lordship, whose minds are captivated by such teachings is not designed the determinate Reason The Vedas deal with the three qualities (gunas of sattava, rajas and tamas), be thou above these three qualities " "All the Vedas are as useful to an enlightened Brāhmaṇa, as is a tank in a place covered all over with water " In G VIII 28 we are told, "The Yogi, having known this truth (about the future life) transcends all the fruits of deeds attached to the Vedic sacrifices etc " Again in Gītā IX 20-22, the knowers of the three Vedas, the *soma*-drink ers and the sacrificers are said to ascend to the world of gods and enjoy divine feasts in heaven, but on the expiry of their merits they are said to come back to this mortal earth Following the virtues enjoined by the three Vedas they obtain the transitory, while the devotees of God are said to enjoy full and permanent security

Similarly in G. XI. §. 53. we are expressly told that neither Vedas nor sacrifices can win for man the vision of the Universal Form, which can only be seen through whole-hearted devotion and faith. Lastly, in G. XVI. 2. we meet with an indirect and implicit reference to the illusory character of the world, represented as a tree with the Vedas as its leaves, and the highest goal and path of man are said to be attainable when this tree is cut down root and branch, by means of the weapons of non-attachment.

19. Thus in the Gītā, the path of knowledge and the path of devotion are held to be superior to the path of sacrificial offerings and external rites enjoined in the Vedas. We can imagine how a movement of reform was inaugurated by the Poet of Gītā by carrying the ideal of spiritual communion with God beyond the formalistic and materialistic stages of religious culture, in which the advocates of Vedas and sacrifices lived at the time. It is here sufficient to observe that the environment of the Poet must have been favourable to the inculcation of a monotheistic and idealistic religion based on devotion and love as there seems to have been an undercurrent of dissatisfaction against the traditional Vedic religion of the orthodox society.

---

and mental, and again, as usual, according to the three gunas or qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* (G. XVII. 14-16, 17-19) Then again all these acts of sacrifices, charity and penance are divided into good (*sat*) and bad (*asat*), according as they are done with faith (Śradhdhá) or without faith (G XVII 27-28); and the former again are said to be performed by the *Brahmavādīs* (seekers after the attainment of Brahma) with the *mantra* or Divine formula of *Om*, and by the seekers of *Moksha* or salvation with the divine symbol of *Tat* (G. XVII 24-25)

13 These various orders or grades of popular religious practices, mentioned in the *Gītā*, give us a faint glimpse of the spiritual atmosphere in which the poet was breathing, and the customs and traditions of the contemporary religious life to which he had to adapt himself We can easily imagine how an earnest seeker after a loftier and more idealistic view of religious life and spiritual culture had to struggle against the existing tendencies and practices of his environments, sometimes assimilating them, sometimes transforming them, now enlarging and expanding, and again liberalising and deepening them, fearlessly setting his face against some, and adopting a more compromising and conservative attitude towards others.

#### (iv) *God and gods.*

14 Now turning to the gods which along with the Vedas have from times immemorial received unflinching worship and devotion and commanded unwavering faith and reverence from the religious minds of India, we find

in the Gītā unmistakable signs of a searching of the heart a genuine inclination or tendency to doubt, and spirit of scepticism as regards their existence, nature and authority. We may confidently assert that the age of the Gītā was an age of spiritual awakening, an age of intellectual Enlightenment and free thinking during which the Indian mind shook to its foundation the Vedic tradition and worship of many gods and sought to rise to a higher level of mono-theistic worship of one God in spirit and in truth. The very conception of gods as helping men and receiving help from men in return, implied in the verse G. III. 11-12 creates an impression that gods were no longer exalted high above mortals of the earth holding sway over the destiny of the latter and demanding unconditional homage and obedience in every sphere of mundane affairs. This impression is strengthened and confirmed by the explicit depreciation of the worship of gods, and the condemnation of those ignorant people who led by desire which robs them of knowledge and under the rule of their lower nature, worship other gods beside the one God, as we find in the verses G. VII. 20. 23 A sharp and clear contrast is made between one supreme God and the various gods, and while the former is exalted above all and is made to grant faith to the believer in other gods, the latter are simply tolerated with the remark that their worshippers go to heaven and dwell with those gods only for a short period after which they come back to the earth. In other words the worshippers of other gods are considered to be inferior to the devotees of one God, who

alone receives whatever is offered to other gods, so that lower religious exercises directed towards the latter are also conceived in a way as worshipping God, though indirectly and irregularly (*Gītā IX 20-21, 23-26*) The same truth is expressed also in *Gītā X 2, 14* and *Gītā XI 6, 15*, where God's transcendent nature is said to be unknown to gods, the latter are counted as Vibhuties or manifestations of God, and as such are seen in the body of God Gods, again, are also desirous of seeing the Universal form of God and are like men subject to the three gunas (*G XI 52* and *XVIII 40*)

15 A careful study of these references to gods in the *Gītā* and of the position that is assigned to them will convince one that the Poet was living in an age when the forces of monotheistic ideas and of devotional fervour were strong enough to assert themselves and to make their influences felt in the religious circles of India, when the worship of many gods was slowly but surely declining and giving way to the spiritual adoration of one God, when men were not satisfied with the round of heavenly bliss and earthly suffering that fell to the lot of those who addressed themselves to various gods in the form of presiding deities of Nature or the shining ones living in a celestial abode The poet was wise enough to recognise in these tendencies and forces of his religious environment a splendid opportunity for promoting a type of spiritual culture founded on his monotheistic ideal, and consisting in the true knowledge and disinterested service of the one God and single-minded devotion and love to Him. But at the same time his conservative in-

stincts did not allow him to break away from the traditional religious beliefs and practices altogether and to dispense with the rites and ceremonies relating to the worship of gods, although he gave the latter a lower and subordinate place in his religious system

(v) *Symbolism and Idolatry*

16 There are some verses in the *Gītā*, which seem to have an idolatrous tinge and remind us of the worship of image of Divinity, which was introduced in the latter-day Brāhmaṇism and forms a prominent feature of the sectarian Hinduism of modern times e g the verses G XI 10, 11, 15-17, 20-32, delineate the universal form of God, embracing in His Infinite Body all the gods and spirits as its limbs This is indeed one of the most wonderful strokes of poetic imagination and creative synthesis that we find in the *Gītā*, and it is the beauty and sublimity of this conception that has elevated our poet to the rank of a first rate originating Genius We need not be surprised if this concrete picture of an abstract Universal, this religious embodiment of an ethical Ideal and a philosophical Truth, this finite and temporal manifestation of what is in its nature and essence Infinite and Eternal, this sensible and visible incarnation of an invisible and supersensible Being, this manifold becoming in a finite-Infinite, concrete-Universal form of the unchanging and unitary Reality, that we find in the *Gītā* (Chapter XI ), was the first and the most successful beginning of that symbolical mode of representing an Idea and mythological way of stating a historical fact or a

scientific law, which has ever since characterised the religious writings (esp the Epic and Purana literature) of India, and which had, I believe, prepared the way for idolatrous rites and worship of images of gods and goddesses in the Hindu temples. This symbolism in the Gītā is however not to be identified with the popular idolatry of modern cults of Brāhmanism. The worship of many gods with leaves, flowers, water and other offerings prevailed no doubt in the religious environment of our Poet, as is indicated by the verses G IX 25, 26, but there is nothing to justify the assumption of practices of idolatrous worship in the Indian society of that age, although, as we have just remarked, the concrete representation of the universe as the body of God in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā may have suggested to the poets and the priests of the later ages the Purānic exaggeration on the one hand and idolatrous excesses on the other.

#### (vi) *Vedas*

17 Similarly with the Vedas. We can infer from the large number of passages in which the Vedas are expressly mentioned by the poet of the Gītā that these holy writings were still regarded by the masses of the Indian people as the invaluable sources of religious knowledge and the unquestionable authority in the regulation of affairs relating to practical life, and as such they were upheld by the priestly classes as the foundation and mainstay of the customs and traditions of society. For example, the study of the Vedas was enjoined as a sacred duty,

included in the list of virtues required to be practised by the house-holder and also prescribed as a mode of penance in the verses G XVI 1 and XVII 15 where *swādhyāya* or study of the Vedas is mentioned as one of the godly qualities, and God is even called the knower of the Vedas, the author of Vedānta, and the only object knowable by the Vedas, and his name Purusottama (the highest person or the supreme spirit) is said to occur in the Vedas (Gītā XV 15, 18) But when we examine all the references to Vedas in the Gītā, we are struck by the manner in which majority of them denounced the Vedic rites and sacrifices It may be noted that the teachings of our poet are usually characterised by a conservative and tolerant attitude, and they do not offend as a rule the religious sensibility of any men, far less disturb the existing faith or upset the current practices of the ignorant multitude or common folk of this country

18. The fact that notwithstanding his respect for popular customs and traditions our author has thought it fit to raise his voice of protest against the Vedic modes of religious observances in no uncertain and ambiguous tone, and to condemn most emphatically the adherents of the Brāhmanical cult, based on the Vedic authority, is in itself a sufficient ground for believing that the Vedic rites had in those times degenerated into mere mechanical and lifeless performances, into dull, dreary, soul-killing formalities, in which self-centred and pleasure-seeking individuals might have indulged under the guidance of interested priests with the object of securing a place in Heaven, but in which the cultured and enlight-

ened Indians had neither faith nor taste, and which were therefore already on the way to being gradually pushed in the back-ground and thrown over-board from the domain of spiritual culture To quote, for instance, a few verses from the Gītā, we find in the second chapter five consecutive verses (G II 42-46) harping on the same string and showing the utter uselessness and even foolishness of following the Vedas for a wise man They tell us, "Flowery speech is uttered by the foolish, rejoicing in the letter of the Vedas, saying there is naught but this , with desire for self, with heaven for goal, they offer birth as the fruit of action, and prescribe many and various ceremonies for the attainment of pleasure and lordship for them who cling to pleasure and lordship, whose minds are captivated by such teachings is not designed the determinate Reason The Vedas deal with the three qualities (gunas of sattava, rajas and tamas), be thou above these three qualities " "All the Vedas are as useful to an enlightened Brāhmaṇa, as is a tank in a place covered all over with water " In G VIII. 28 we are told, "The Yogi, having known this truth (about the future life) transcends all the fruits of deeds attached to the Vedic sacrifices etc " Again in Gītā IX 20-22, the knowers of the three Vedas, the *soma*-drinkers and the sacrificers are said to ascend to the world of gods and enjoy divine feasts in heaven, but on the expiry of their merits they are said to come back to this mortal earth Following the virtues enjoined by the three Vedas they obtain the transitory, while the devotees of God are said to enjoy full and permanent security

Similarly in G XI 48, 53, we are expressly told that neither Vedas nor sacrifices can win for man the vision of the Universal Form, which can only be seen through whole-hearted devotion and faith. Lastly, in G XVI 2, we meet with an indirect and implicit reference to the illusory character of the world, represented as a tree with the Vedas as its leaves, and the highest goal and path of man are said to be attainable when this tree is cut down, root and branch, by means of the weapons on non-attachment

19 Thus in the *Gītā*, the path of knowledge and the path of devotion are held to be superior to the path of sacrificial offerings and external rites enjoined in the Vedas. We can imagine how a movement of reform was inaugurated by the Poet of *Gītā* by carrying the ideal of spiritual communion with God beyond the formalistic and materialistic stages of religious culture, in which the advocates of Vedas and sacrifices lived at the time. It is here sufficient to observe that the environment of the Poet must have been favourable to the inculcation of a monotheistic and idealistic religion based on devotion and love, as there seems to have been an undercurrent of dissatisfaction against the traditional Vedic religion of the orthodox society.

---

## SECTION V

## HIGHER MODES OF SPIRITUAL CULTURE

20 A brief survey of the various modes of spiritual discipline and the different classes of religious seekers, who earnestly endeavoured to live a higher type of devout life, as mentioned in the *Gītā*, will show that the surroundings of the Poet provided ample materials for the working out of an idealistic religious system and the formation of a more rational conception of man's inner relationship with God. Indeed the demand for an intellectual reconstruction of the religious world-view, and the necessity for a spiritual culture that could also satisfy the speculative interests of the human mind, at the time of the composition of the *Gītā*, will be apparent from the position which knowledge, reason and wisdom occupy in the *Gītāic* system of religious teaching, and from the attempts which are made in several places to uphold the ideal of the "wise man", and at the same time to establish that wisdom and love, or contemplation and action, are not opposed to each other but can be easily reconciled and harmonised, and that a *Yogi* is no less a seer than a devotee (a *Bhakta*). We are not concerned here with the religious ideal of the Poet, but only with the tendencies and dispositions and modes of thought and life among the religious minds of the society and the age in which the Poet was born and brought up. And these we can ascertain within reasonable limits of certainty by reference to the passages in the *Gītā*, where more than

one path of religious enquiry and different modes of spiritual discipline are mentioned

(i) *Superiority of The Path of Wisdom—its Various Branches—Religion and Philosophy*

21. First of all, the parting of the ways between the popular religion of sacrifices including Vedic rites and worship of gods on the one hand and the higher religion of the educated and cultured Indian on the other, is indicated by the representation of wisdom as the best of all sacrifices as the saving raft for crossing the ocean of death as the light that burns all sins as the sword that cuts off all doubts and fetters of action (G IV. 33, 36, 37, 41, 42) Wisdom being the quickest path that can lead one to peace ever-lasting (G IV. 39) it is but natural that there should have been several courses of discipline prescribed for the attainment of wisdom and that there were various classes of teachers in society to impart regular and systematic instructions to young seekers after spiritual life Thus according to the Gitā (IV 38-39), the higher knowledge evolved of itself within the mind of one who is practised in Yoga and could be acquired only as an effect of long training, of which faith, steadfastness and self-control were the necessary elements The ultimate goal of the path of wisdom—the knowledge which could deliver men from all illusion—consisted in seeing all objects in the self and then in God (G. IV. 35). This redeeming knowledge or beatific vision could be taught only by the wise seers of truths, who on their part demanded a sincere spirit of reverence, of service and of enquiry from the disciples approaching

them with an earnest desire to learn and accepting them as their preceptors (G. IV. 34).

22 Those who followed the path of wisdom could be divided into several classes according as they tried to realise the self in different ways. Thus (a) some used to see the self in the self by the self through meditation, (b) some tried to behold that self by the method of reflection (*sankhya-yoga*), (c) others used to attain the same end through the fulfilment of duty (*Karma yoga*), (d) while still others, ignorant of these methods, used to worship only by hearing from others and adhering to what they had heard (G. XIII. 25-26). We also learn from the verses G. XIII. 19, 24, 28-31 & 35, that this intellectual avenue to the temple of God or the speculative mode of religious culture had so highly advanced and received such a prominent share of attention that subtle distinctions and classifications had begun to be made in this field, and this mode of spiritual training was already encroaching upon, and tended to be nearly identical with, philosophical investigation. For instance, the true wisdom which secures to man the vision of God in all beings of the universe is said to consist in a full knowledge of all the three departments of the (i) the field (the body and its modifications), (ii) the object of knowledge, and (iii) the act of knowledge (G. XIII. 19), of the distinction between Purasa and Prakrti, (spirit and Matter) with the qualities (Gunas) (G. XIII. 24), and clean perception of the diversified existence of beings as rooted in the One and spreading forth from the One (G. XIII. 34, 35).

23 It is a distinguishing characteristic of the Indian people that for them philosophy is religion and religion philosophy, and in these passages of the Gītā we may undoubtedly recognise, though dimly and crudely, the first beginnings of that natural bent for philosophising and the earliest gropings of the speculative faculty of the Indian mind under the guidance and inspiration of the religious impulse. Here again we would do well to note that the Poet of the Gītā was fortunate enough in finding around himself a high level of intellectual life initiated and furthered by the religious enquiries of his times. In India, as everywhere else, religion was the mother of philosophy, and poetry was the form in which both received their earliest utterances.

(ii) *Types of Religious Enquiries and Disciplines —  
The Deeper Currents of The Age*

24 The vitality of the Indian society so far as its religio-philosophical and ethico-devotional life was concerned, during the period when the poet of the Divine Song was composing his work, can be best imagined by keeping before our eyes the large variety of alternative modes of discipline and systems of culture that have been mentioned or suggested in the Gītā for the promotion and the elevation of spiritual life. I have already noted the various kinds of sacrifices, both material and mental, that were performed in those days, and also the popular religious practices of penance, charity and study of the scriptures that were prevalent in the environment of the Poet. I have also observed that two different classes of worshippers were recognised in the society of that age viz.

(1) those who performed sacrifices, practised charity and penances as ordained in scriptures, uttering the Divine syllable 'Om',—known as *Brahmavádi* or seekers after Brahma, and (2) those who worshipped by way of sacrifices, charities and penances, without desiring fruits and uttering the Divine syllable 'Tat'—known as *Moksa-kánksin* or seekers after liberation Let me now cast a glance on the other types of spiritual culture and other classes of religious students The questions that Arjuna put to Krsna are themselves indications of the line along which the enquiries of earnest disciples in those days were directed

### (iii) *Renunciation and Action*

25 The way of renunciation (*sannyásā*) and the way of action (*yoga*) were long-standing rivals and were competing for mastery in the field of religious culture in India, and both claimed sincere advocates and adherents in the social environment of our Poet The solution of this problem and the reconciliation of these two modes of spiritual culture, therefore, received his earliest attention (G V 1-7) These two modes of religious discipline were also called *sánkhyā* (reflective consideration or calculation) and *Yoga* (concentration or action) respectively, and it is from these two practical schools of spiritual culture that there arose the later systems of philosophy bearing the same names Practice does in many cases precede theory, and this law which holds good in the evolution of religious doctrines and philosophical

systems of almost all civilised countries was exemplified no less in the history of Indian Culture.

(iv) *Theism and Pantheism*

26 Another pair of anti-thesis, which was prevalent in the religious system of those days and to which also the Poet applied his philosopher's stone for a harmonious reconciliation, is to be found in the distinction that was drawn between (1) those devotees who worship God (in His personal aspect) through constant communion and (2) those who meditate on the Indestructible and the Unmanifested (i.e. Brahma or God in His impersonal aspect) (G XII 1-7). These two classes may be regarded as representing the modern advocates of the theories of Transcendence and Immanence of God respectively, and they were thus already preparing the way for the schools that have since been differentiated into theistic and pantheistic systems of philosophy and religion. We are thus led to believe that the author of the *Gītā* was born in an age when problems were presenting themselves and questions were arising in the minds of earnest religious enquirers, for the solution and answer of which a master-mind with the inspiration of a Prophet and the genius of a poet, the insight of a philosopher and the intuition of a devotee was the supreme necessity of the hour.

(v) *Hierarchy of Spiritual disciplines in the Gītā*

27 We meet with a number of alternative disciplines of religious life which were offered by the pre-

ceptors to the disciples of the age, according to the capacity, taste or inclination of the latter e g (1) placing mind or reason in God was considered to be the highest and the most difficult mode of spiritual culture, failing which (2) a pupil could resort to the yoga of *Abhyásā* or practice , (3) next to this in order of easy access for the religious apprentice was serving God or working for His sake, and if even the last was found by a disciple to be difficult to practise, (4) there was open to him yet another mode of spiritual discipline viz renouncing the fruits of one's action with the soul subdued and the heart united with God (G XII 8-11) The various processes of religious culture enumerated here must have already prevailed to some extent, although in a crude and imperfect manner, in the environments of our Poet, before he could subject them to his moral judgment and pronounce a verdict of superiority of the one over the other, and signify his preference of some, approval of others, and toleration of all Again, the passage immediately following the above-mentioned verses (G XII 12) seems to confirm the truth of what we have said just now with slight modifications For it expressly lays down a graded scale or a hierarchy of modes of discipline, including some of those already referred to, in an ascending order as follows "superior to practice is wisdom, higher than wisdom is meditation, above meditation stands renunciation of the fruits of action, on which follows peace" This wealth of variety in the processes of religious culture and their systematic ordering by our poet in accordance with

their excellence, give us a glimpse of the depth as well as the range of spiritual experiences that nourished and strengthened, elevated and enriched the religious life of the people of that age.

(vi) *Four Varieties of Seekers after God*

28 In another place we find a classification of the devotees of God into four different kinds, viz (1) those who are afflicted or in distress, (2) enquirers or seekers after knowledge, (3) self-interested persons, desirous of winning an object and (4) the wise, among whom the last-mentioned (the wise) are the best. as they are constantly united with and devoted to God and recognise God as all in all, they may be said to be God's very selves (G VII 16-19) Here too the various classes of worshippers mentioned indicate that there must have existed in the religious environment of the poet different types of spiritual culture, and that our author must have not only come in contact with the higher types of seekers after God, but also appreciated and sympathised with all other classes of worshippers, (G VII 18) although he put a stamp of superiority on the wise (G 17-19)

29 In those days, as it has been in every age a combination of culture and faith, of the speculative reason and religious intuition, of an intellectual attitude and a devotional temperament, was a rare virtue only to be found in the lives of the best of men such as those who were fortunate enough in being endowed by nature with a highly developed reason and intellect.

and also gifted by providence with the heavenly bliss of spiritual perception, and who had the necessary moral preparations and religious training that would enable them to practise this most difficult and delicate art of adoration and meditation and thereby to attain the final goal of human culture viz the highest excellence or perfection of the soul. There can be no question about the fact that the author of the *Gītā* was by congenital disposition and natural bent of mind, by acquired habits and self-imposed training, as well as by reason of his favourable religious environments, one of these wise devotees of God blessed with the rare combination of spiritual insight and rational understanding.

(vii) *Religion of Devotion—Worship in Congregation*

30 From what we have said above, it is clear that the religious environment of the Poet of the *Gītā* was peculiarly suited to the task he had undertaken in composing the sacred song in so far as it supplied an abundance of spiritual nourishment for his inner life, and provided a wealth of materials to him in the form of the religious practices and experiences of the people of his times for a reconstruction of the spiritual ideal and for a transformation of the religious out-look on the basis of love and devotion to God, of service and self-dedication to the Supreme Spirit in faith and resignation. This will be further evident from the consideration of those verses in the *Gītā* where the religion of Bhakti (love or devotion) is specially dealt with.

31. The Divine song has been regarded as the chief text-book and the best manual for the religion of love, and this just characteristic of our poem must have been derived from the fact that its author lived in an atmosphere deeply surcharged with devotional fervour and loving zeal in the service of God, and in a society purified and elevated by the congregational modes of worshipping and singing the praises of God. It is because the Poet himself received his early training in the midst of a highly spiritual environment and was thoroughly initiated into the mysteries of devotional life through his individual experiences and culture as well as through his social intercourse in religious congregations of his time, that he could give utterances to the sublime religion of love in such an exalted spirit and in such a refined manner, with a beautiful style and fine poetic rhythm, faithfully reflecting as in a transparent mirror the ethereal splendour and profound depth of the thoughts and sentiments within the breast of the religious people of the age. Thus the *Gītā* tells us that the great-souled men (*Mahātmās*) partaking of the divine nature, worship God with unwavering mind, always singing to the praise and glory of the most High, strenuously exerting themselves in their spiritual endeavours, firm in their vows, prostrating themselves before the Supreme, they worship God with devotion and in constant communion, others also sacrificing with the sacrifice of wisdom worship Him as the One and the Manifold, facing everywhere (IX 13-15). Again we are told that the wise adore God in rapt emotion, con-

ceiving Him to be the generator of all, from whom every thing evolved , their minds fixed in Him, their life devoted to Him, enlightening each other, ever conversing about Him, they rejoice and remain content (X 8-9) Such a congregation of devout souls was believed to be a special channel for the divine inspiration, a fit vehicle for the transmission of divine power and a worthy receptacle for the distribution of divine grace, for, as the next two verses tell us, "To such devotees in a spiritual assembly who are constantly in communion with God and adore Him in love, God grants that illumination of Yoga by which they come unto Him Out of pure compassion for them, dwelling within their self, the Divine Preceptor destroys the darkness of ignorance in their minds by the shining lamp of wisdom (G X 10, 11)

(viii) *Belief in the redeeming Grace and Inspiration of God*

32. Belief in the grace of God and in the superiority of faith and love as the best means of attaining salvation, has been a constant handmaid of devotional religions, and it is but natural that such a belief should be prevalent in the environment of our Poet, and find expression in his writings As the Gītā puts it, "Even if the most sinful worship God with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he hath rightly resolved , speedily he becometh dutiful and goeth to eternal peace . one must know it for certain that the devotees of God, even though they may be of the womb of

sin, women, Vaiśyas, even Śūdras, also tread the highest path, not to speak of the holy Brāhmaṇas and devoted royal saints (G. IX 30-33). Salvation by faith for one and all without any distinction of sex and caste, and even of merit, could not be preached more eloquently and more effectively than in these verses of the Gītā, and we should have no difficulty in forming a picture of the society which made the teaching of this message possible.

33 Again the idea of God's imparting to his devotees heavenly grace in its special form of inspiration or grant of beatific vision was not unknown in those days, as we can gather from the verses G. XI 1, 8, 47, where God is said to communicate to His devotees the secrets of spiritual life out of grace, and to grant the eye of the soul with which alone His majestic divine form can be perceived, and where the devotee is said to get a glimpse of the loftiest form of God by His favour, although neither sacrifice, nor Veda, nor rigid austerity, nor wide study can win the vision of this Form for men. Even the gods are said to long to behold this universal Form of God. Such is the sovereignty and the wonderful power of devotion (G. XI 48, 52, 54), and it is by this secret alone that one can perceive and know and see God in His essence and enter into His being (G. XI 54). It is in these verses, if anywhere at all, that we can discover the source and the origin of the Bhāgavata doctrines of Divine grace and love.

(ix) *Intellectual Elements of Religion.*

34. The conceptions of God and His relation to the World and the soul, the ideas about future life and the

final destiny of man, or the nature of salvation, that prevailed in the religious atmosphere of that age, give us a glimpse into the intellectual environment of the Poet, as the ideas and conceptions relating to the religious views of the Gītā were more or less dominated by the intellectual speculations of the contemporary society. This must be dealt with in a separate chapter.

(x) *Realisation of the highest State of God-consciousness*

35 From the exquisite delineation of the *Viswarrūpa* or the Universal, All-embracing Form of God revealed to Arjuna and the beautiful hymn and prayer put in the mouth of Arjuna in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā, we can infer that the best and the highest exponents of spiritual life in these days upheld and encouraged a mode of worship consisting in an earnest endeavour to realise the presence and the majesty of the Divine Being in each and every object, filling all spaces and all times i.e. an attitude of adoration that is now known as *Ārādhanā* in the Brahmo Samaj of modern India. To be able to bow down to God in reverence and humility, feeling the Divine Presence in all directions—north and south, east and west, right and left, up and down, before and behind—and to be constantly filled with a God-consciousness that enables one to see and perceive as it were with one's own eyes, how the Divine Life pulsates through the entire universe of nature and mind, matter and spirit, regulating all events and happenings, all processes and activities in the individual life as well as

in the life of the society, giving lustre to the planets and moisture to the plants and dispensing power and glory to all that is beautiful and sublime in nature and in the human mind—this must have been recognised to be the highest goal of spiritual culture by those rare souls who were specially gifted with faith and culture, before the poet of the *Gītā* could conceive of this beatific vision of the universe as the body of God and give such a noble expression to this deep longing and earnest endeavours of the spiritually-minded people of his age in his own original and inimitable way. We can imagine the loftiness of religious thoughts and the depth of spiritual experiences from which alone could spring the mystic raptures and ecstacies of an all-absorbing and all-embracing god-consciousness, as described in G. X 15-31, §6. 44. And such sentiments and expressions could be possible only in a highly elevated religious environment.

(xi) *Nāmakīrtana or Chanting the Name of God*

§6. Another characteristic of spiritual culture dominating the devotional life of the Hindus even to this day is also hinted at in the *Gītā* viz. the practice or the habit of chanting the name of God, i e uttering His names repeatedly in faith and love and singing His praises with fervent piety both in congregation and in solitude. Thus in the verse G. XI, §6 we are told, the world rejoiceth, while singing His praises ; the chanting of His holy name makes the devils or demons fly in fear to every quarter, but causes the hosts of saints or perfect souls to fall prostrate in devotion. From the

next few verses (G. XI 37-40) we can make out that such singings and chantings (or what in the modern devotional language of India may be called *Bhajana* or *Kirtana*, or *samkirtana*) were followed by the most intense forms of religious enthusiasm and deepest stirrings of the heart, and also a most vivid realisation of the omnipresence of God, finding their outlet in a reverential bowing and humble salutation in all directions, and may-be, a devout prostration of the body on the part of the worshippers

(xii) *Last Thoughts as determining the Future Fate of the Devotee*

37. Again, the habit of remembering the name of God constantly and without fail, and that especially at the hour of death, was enjoined in the religious circle of those days and even considered to be meritorious in view of the belief that the fate of a man in the next world is to a large extent determined by the thoughts in his mind at the moment of his expiry. Thus one who casts off the body, while thinking upon God only at the dying moment, enters into the being of God. Hence the necessity of thinking upon God at all times, for with mind and reason fixed on God, one is sure to come to Him (G. VIII 5-8). This belief prevailed even during the age of the older Upanisads

(xiii) *Yoga as a Religious Discipline and the Ideal of Spiritual Life*

38. The practice of *yoga* or concentration of mind on God in a particular bodily posture and mental atti-

tude was one of the most effective means of religious culture for the people in those days and the modes of spiritual discipline prevalent at the time included among other things a due regulation of one's daily life, especially of the habits of eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, moderation in the use of one's sense-organs and limbs, and a judicious exercise of self-restraint and self-control in the sphere of physical and mental activities. This can be established with certainty from a large number of verses in the fifth, sixth and eighth chapters of the Gītā. We quote, for example, some of these : With the mind, not wandering after aught else, concentrated by continual practice, constantly meditating, one goeth to the supreme Divine spirit. One who thinketh upon the Ancient, the Omniscient, the All-ruler at the time of his expiring, with unshaken mind, fixed in devotion, by the power of yoga drawing together his life-breath in the centre of the two eye-brows, he goeth to the Supreme Spirit Divine. All the gates (i.e. sense-organs) closed, the mind confined in the heart, the life-breath fixed in his own head, concentrated by *Yoga* reciting 'O.M' (the name of the Eternal Brahma), thinking upon God—one who goeth forth abandoning the body in this condition treads the highest path. By him who constantly remembers God, not thinking ever of anything else, by such an ever harmonized *Yogi*, God is easily attainable' (G. VIII. 8-10, 12-14).

59. We meet with a fuller and more significant description of the *Yogi* or religious devotee in the fifth and sixth chapters of the Gītā, which present to us a

vivid and accurate picture of the type of devout life or the ideal of spiritual discipline and culture that prevailed among the highest classes of seekers after God in those days "He who is harmonised by *yoga*, whose self has been purified, who is self-ruled, and has his senses subdued, whose self has become the self of all beings, he is not affected although acting The harmonised one, who knoweth the essence of things, should think, "I do not do anything" even while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes he holdeth "the senses move among the objects of the senses" He acteth, placing all actions in the Eternal (Brahma), abandoning attachment and is therefore unaffected by sin as a lotus leaf by the waters Yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform action only by the body, by the mind, by the reason and even by the senses, for the purification of the self Having abandoned the fruit of action, the harmonised man attaineth peace eternal , mentally removing all actions, the sovereign dweller in the body resteth serenely in the nine-gated city, neither acting, nor causing to act" "Thinking of That (ie Brahma), merged in That, established in That, solely devoted to That, they (the yogis) go whence there is no return, their sins dispelled by wisdom" "Sages look equally on all Those whose minds remain balanced overcome everything even here on earth , they are established in the Eteinal, which is incorruptible and equipoised With reason firm, unperplexed, the knower of Brahma, abiding in Brahma, neither rejoiceth

on obtaining what is pleasant, nor sorroweth on obtaining what is disagreeable He whose self is unattached to external contacts and findeth joy in the self, having the self harmonised with Brahma by yoga enjoys peace imperishable ' 'He who is able to endure here on earth, ere he is liberated from the body, the force born from desire and passion, he is harmonised, he is a happy man He who is happy within, who rejoiceth within who is illuminated within that yogī, becoming Brahma attains the peace of (or absorption in) Brahman. Rsis (seers) with their sins destroyed, their quality removed, their selves controlled, intent upon the welfare of all beings attain Nirvāna in Brahma This Nirvāna in Brahma lies near to those who know themselves, who are disjoined from desire and passion, are subdued in nature, and are of subdued thoughts Having external contacts excluded and with gaze fixed between the eye-brows having made equal the out-going and ingoing breaths moving within the nostrils, with senses, mind and reason ever controlled, solely pursuing liberation, the sage having for ever cast away desire, fear and passion, verily is liberated (G V 7-13, 17-21, 23-28).

40 Again we are told, when a man feeleth no attachment either for the objects of the senses or for actions, renouncing all resolves (or undertakings), then he is said to be enthroned in *yoga*. The self is the friend of the self of him in whom the self by the self is vanquished, but to the unsubdued self, the self verily becomes hostile as an enemy. The highest self of him

who is self-controlled and peaceful is uniform in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, as well as in honour and dishonour The *yogi*, who is satisfied with wisdom and knowledge, unwavering, whose senses are subdued, to whom a lump of earth, or stone and gold are the same, is said to be harmonised . He who regards impartially lovers, friends and foes, strangers, neutrals, foreigners and relatives, also the righteous and unrighteous, he excelleth Let the *yogi* constantly engage himself in *yoga*, remaining in a secret place by himself, with thought and self subdued, free from hope and greed in a pure place, established on a fixed seat of his own, neither very much raised nor very low, made of a cloth, a black antelope skin and kuśa grass, one over the other, there having concentrated the mind to a single point, with thought and the function of the senses subdued, steady on his seat, he should practise *yoga* for the purification of the self holding the body, head and neck erect, immovably steady, looking fixedly at the point of the nose, without turning the gaze in any direction, the self serene, fearless, firm in the vow of the *Brahmachāri* (celibate or free from sex-urge) the mind controlled, thinking on God, harmonised, let him sit aspiring after God The *yogi* ever united thus with the self, with the mind controlled, goeth to Peace, to the supreme Bliss abiding in God Verily *Yoga* is not for him, who eateth too much, nor who abstaineth to excess, nor who is too much addicted to sleep, nor even to wakefulness *Yoga* killeth out all pain for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, regulated in performing actions,

regulated in sleeping and waking. When his subdued thought is fixed on the self, free from longing for all desirable things then it is said, "He is harmonised." As a lamp in a wind-less place flickereth not so such is likened the *yogi* of subdued thought absorbed in the *yoga* of the self (G VI 4, 6-19). Then follows a more detailed description of the state of *Yoga* and the processes of attaining it (G. VI. 20-32).

41 This picture of a passionless sage or of a *yogi*, perfectly equanimous and harmonised and constantly communing with God has been presented in the *Gītā* several times as the ideal of spiritual endeavours either under the name of "One who is established on Reason" (G. II 53-61) or of one "who is beloved of God" (G XII 13-20). Similarly, the enumeration of the virtues which belong to men of divine nature (G XVI 1-3) and of the qualities which are said to constitute wisdom (*Gītā* XIII. 8-12) also confirms and completes the essential marks of an ideal man according to the moral and religious standard of the society in which the author of the *Gītā* was born and brought up.

It appears that the principal elements of virtue which seem to have received special emphasis at the time were unattachment, freedom from the family cares and ties, equal regard for all, passionlessness and love of solitude and self-sufficiency, including enjoyment of self, and thus involving meditation and contemplation.

---

## SECTION VI.

### SOME POPULAR BELIEFS OF THE TIMES

#### (a) *Superstitious Belief in the Paths of Rebirth.*

42 Finally, two popular beliefs prevalent in the religious environment, which seem to have influenced the minds of the pious classes, and contributed to their religious practices to a large extent during the age when the *Gītā* was composed, require our special notice

In the *Gītā* we meet with a teaching that the rebirth or otherwise of a man depends on the time of his departing from the earth (G VIII. 22-28) For example, the knowers of Brahma going forth at the time when the day is bright as fire, or during the bright fortnight or the six months of the northern path, are said to go to Brahma , the *Yogi* departing at the time when the night is dark or during the black fortnight or during the six months of the southern path attains the moonlit world , thus light and darkness are thought to be the world's everlasting paths , by the one he goeth who returneth not, by the other he who returneth again This strange conception seems to me to be the remnant of a superstitious belief which the ancient Aryans inherited from their ancestors and which seems to have been prevalent during the Upanisadic age, these verses themselves or their parallel being found to occur in the Chhāndogya and the Brhadāranyaka Upanisads The presence of these verses in the *Gītā*, if they are not interpolated, signifies on the one hand how the Poet was in-

fluenced by the beliefs, however unreasonable and superstitious, that were prevalent in his age, and how his thoughts were moulded to some extent by his environments, and supports on the other hand the view that the Gītā belongs to the thought-circle of the Upanisads and must be assigned to an age when the Philosophy of the Upanisads was still in the making.

(b) *Merits of Reading and Expounding Religious Texts—Resemblance of the Gītā to the Purāṇas and the Upanisads*

43 Another popular religious belief found in the Gītā, to which I desire to draw the attention of our readers, is the faith that the reading and hearing of a particular scripture or a chapter thereof, or even the expounding and practising of a particular religious teaching, have peculiar merits attached to them and may lead one to salvation apart from any other spiritual discipline or culture. Thus we are told that those who constantly practise in life the theory of Karmayoga or disinterested action without attachment and without desire of enjoying the fruit, while dedicating all works to God, are delivered from the fetters of actions, but those who thoughtlessly do not follow this doctrine are sure to be ruined (G III 31-32). So we find in Gītā IV 9, 14, that he who knows the divine births and activity of an incarnation of God in their essence, does not, after casting off the body, assume re-birth, but comes to God, and he who knows God as not affected by actions, nor desiring the fruit of actions, is not fettered by actions,

Similarly the *Yogi* is said to pass beyond the fruits of meritorious deeds attached to the Vedas, to the sacrifices, to penances and charities and to go to the supreme and ancient seat, by having known the doctrines relating to Brahma and *yoga* as expounded in the eighth chapter (G VIII 28) Again, the people who have no faith in the royal secret communicated in the ninth chapter are said to revolve in the paths of this world of death, without attaining God (G IX 3) Those who know the various manifestations of God in their essence, as described in the tenth chapter, are said to be harmonised by unfaltering *yoga* without doubt (G X 7) Also, 'they verily who partake of this life-giving wisdom as taught herein (i.e. in the twelfth chapter) endued with faith, with God as their supreme object,'—such devotees are said to be extremely dear to God (G XII 20) In G XIII 19, 24, 35, it is declared that the devotee of God, knowing the field, wisdom and the object of wisdom, enters into the Being of God, he who thus knoweth spirit and matter with the qualities, in whatsoever condition he may be, he shall not be born again they who by the eyes of wisdom perceived the difference between the field and the knower of the field, and the liberation of beings from matter, they go to the Supreme That the knowledge of certain doctrines leads one to perfection or Salvation is all proclaimed in G XIV 14, 19, 20 So also in G XV 19, 20, the redemptive character of a certain kind of knowledge is upheld

44 Lastly, the concluding verses of the *Gītā* contain a forcible exhortation by the preceptor on the dis-

ciple as to how the teachings of the Gītā are to be communicated or utilised "Never is this to be spoken", it tells us, "to any one who is without austerity, nor to one without devotion, nor to one who desireth not to listen nor yet to him who speaketh evil of God (or His incarnation) He who shall declare this supreme secret among the devotees of God, placing the highest devotion on God, without doubt shall come to God. Nor is there any among men who performeth dearer service to God than he, nor any other than he shall be more beloved by God on earth and he who shall study this sacred dialogue, by him shall God be worshipped with the sacrifice of wisdom The man also who full of faith, merely heareth it unreviling, even he, being liberated, obtaineth the radiant worlds of the righteous" (G. XVIII 67-71)

45 These numerous passages in the Gīta enjoining the study of its contents and the practical realisation in life of its teachings are very significant, inasmuch as they represent a condition of society in which religion was with the masses of people more a matter of faith based on authority and external observances (e.g. the regular study of scriptures or exposition of their teachings as a fixed routine or mode of spiritual discipline), rather than a thing of reason, which the individual was at liberty to discuss and accept, only so far as his conscience freely approved of it, and which was therefore primarily concerned with the inner spiritual culture and reform of the soul But these passages also reveal a close resemblance between the Gītā and the Purāṇas and the

Upanisads, for in the latter two we find the same mode of exhortation, the same art of influencing the minds of the masses by attaching special merits to the reading of the various scriptures or the observance in practical life of the various doctrines taught in these scriptures. In this feature which connects our poem with the oldest Purānic and the Upanasadic literature and the most ancient customs and traditions of the land we may discover another proof of the antiquity of the Gītā.

---

### *SECTION VII*

#### TRUTH AND ERROR IN DR. BHANDARKAR'S VIEWS.

46 It may be urged that the religious environment of the Gītā favoured an ascetic or detached mode of life away from the society of men, with the son and wife and home, and did not leave much room for the performance of domestic duties or cultivation of social virtues. We cannot possibly deny that there is an element of truth in this view of Dr Bhandarkar, viz. that "There was a tendency among the people to give up worldly life and betake themselves to residence in forests and mountains at the time when the Gītā was composed, and we are also prepared to admit that "teaching like that of the Gītā was necessary to counteract this tendency."

cy." But we are bound to dissent from this learned scholar in respect of other features of the Indian life and society, which according to him, led to the evolution of the religion of the *Gītā*, viz the view that "religious systems that had sprung up were mostly atheistic, and the Indian mind had become prone to indulge in mere moral discourses and thoughts of moral exaltation unassociated with theistic faith" For, the survey of the various types of religious practices and moral disciplines, different modes of spiritual culture and the ideal of religious life that are referred to in the *Gītā*, gives us a quite different impression and picture of the religious atmosphere in which the poet must have lived and taught, and leads us to the conclusion that devotional fervour, congregational worship and spiritual fellowship, as well as adoration, meditation and religious exercises by individuals on monotheistic lines, rather than atheistic tendencies, were the most characteristic features of the age This is also evident from the fact that the *Gītā* does not enter into a polemic against any sceptical or atheistical propaganda, nor suggest the prevalence of irreligion or unbelief in the social environments, against which our poet had to carry on a theistic campaign There were no doubt certain classes of people in those days, as it is in every age, who corresponded to the modern sceptics and materialists, and such people are emphatically denounced and condemned in the *Gītā* But that is not by itself a sufficient justification for assuming that the *Gītā* came into existence to counteract the atheistic tendencies of the times.

Even the ascetic tendency of the times admitted by us was nothing peculiar to the age of our poet, but had been the characteristic of the period in which the Upanisads and Āranyakas were composed, as these are generally the products of the ancient Institutions of Āśramas in Tapobana or hermitages in forests

---

### *SECTION VIII*

#### CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

47 If the picture that we have drawn here of the religious atmosphere of the poet's environments from a brief survey of the relevant allusions and references in the Gītā itself, faithfully represents the condition of society in which the poet must have lived, as we believe it does, we can reasonably draw the following conclusions —

- (1) That the Gītā was composed at an age when the popular religious practices of scriptural studies, sacrificial performances, austere penances and generous alms-giving were found to be insufficient and unsatisfactory
- (2) That the poet lived in a society where the Vedas and the gods were no longer held in high respect, but modes of worship based on faith in them and in their

exalted authority were given a secondary place in the religious system and were giving way to a devotional religion of the monotheistic type.

(3) That there was a new awakening of the religious consciousness, or a sort of spiritual illumination among the people, manifesting itself along three concurrent lines of religious culture or modes of spiritual discipline, viz. (i) the path of knowledge directed towards speculative understanding of God, matter and soul and their relation to each other, (ii) the path of disinterested action or Yoga, of service or self-dedication to God, without attachment and without desire for rewards, (iii) the path of faith and love, leading to an intense devotional ardour, and mystic ecstasies and enthusiasm at the vision of the all-embracing Form of God, this last also including such practices as chanting the name of God in a congregation of devout souls, and such elements as faith in the ideas of grace and inspiration.

(4) That it is not true, as Dr. Bhandarkar assumes, that the prevailing thoughts and tendencies, practices and movements of the age were atheistic and sceptical and directed towards dry and dreary moral discussions of a non-theistic character. On the contrary, the atmosphere of the society in which the poet of the *Gītā* was born and brought up was saturated and surcharged with deep devotional fervour, pure monotheistic ideas, lofty speculative thoughts, and healthy spiritual experiences—and that because there existed in the environment a considerable variety of ethical ideas and modes

of spiritual culture, of religious practices and types of philosophical disciplines.

48 Now, when we compare this picture with the condition of Indian life and thought, with the stage of religious practice and intellectual speculation, that prevailed in the Upanisadic age, we are struck by the number and the nature of the points of resemblance between the two. In the Upanisads, we find the beginning of that movement of freedom of the individual in the spheres of thought and practice, of that emancipation of the reason and conscience of man from the thraldom of authority, of that revolt against the externality of the Vedic sacrifices and the plurality of Vedic gods, of that search for unity in philosophy and religion, of that harmony between the conflicting conceptions of Pantheism and Theism, Monism and Dualism, of the Infinite and the Finite, of the Transcendent and the Immanent, of the Universal and the Individual, the Absolute and the personal Self—which reached its high water mark in the age of systematic speculations and which found its balanced equipoise and centre of gravity in the Religion and Philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā. We notice the same tendency to internalise and spiritualise the Vedic religion, the same emphasis on the inwardness, disinterestedness and the purity of motives, the same recoil against mere formalities and self-seeking and slavery to passions in the practical life, the same elaboration of Yoga, injunction of meditation and demand for a whole-hearted faith and devotion, the same earnest search for the Highest Self or the Supreme Spirit, the

same vision of the omnipresence of God and vivid realisation of God-consciousness in each and every atom of the universe and in each and every cell of the human body, the same raptures and ecstacies of the mystic union of the soul with God in the Upanisads, as we find in the Gītā

49 No one with a critical eye and an unbiassed spirit can fail to see in the Gītā the higher development and richer unfolding of the same religio-philosophical tendencies and practices that were but dimly and indistinctly dawning upon the horizon of Indian civilisation during the age of the Upanisads. We are thus justified in assigning the Gītā to the Upanisadic age and in rejecting the views of those who discover in our text traces of Buddhistic or Christian influences, and refer it accordingly to the atheistic, sceptical and materialistic environments at the time of the Buddhistic upheaval, or to the devotional, monotheistic and spiritually elevated and purified atmosphere of the post-Christian age. These conclusions of ours will be confirmed by a close and systematic study of the doctrines of the Bhagavad-gītā, most of which can be traced to their sources in the earliest Vedic and Upanisadic literature of India. A truer perspective of the relation between the spiritual ideal of the Gītā and the religions of Buddha and of Christ on the one hand, and between the speculative elements of the Gītā and the various systems of philosophy and theology advocated by the Hindu, Buddhistic and Christian thinkers on the other, will also lead to same conclusion

---

## CHAPTER II

### SOCIAL SURROUNDINGS AND MORAL IDEAS OF THE POET

#### *SECTION I*

##### SOCIAL AND MORAL ENVIRONMENTS

50 With regard to the social and moral environments of the Poet, the following questions naturally arise in the mind of every earnest enquirer

I What kind of people did the poet find around himself in the society of his time? What were their dispositions and tendencies, their likes and dislikes?

II What kind of family life and civic and economic organisations did there exist in the contemporary society? And how did the various classes of people group themselves in the social order?

III What were the customs and traditions that prevailed in society? How were they enforced and why were they followed at all?

IV What were the moral ideas that dominated the conduct of the people in society? What were the motives of their action and what was the ultimate standard in their moral judgment and the highest ideal of their moral life?

An accurate answer to these questions is sure to be helpful to us in defining the character of the poet and of his work. For it is the moral ethos and the social condition of a people that determines the nature of the problems that arise in the minds of the individuals and also the kind of solutions that satisfy them. The poet of the Gītā in spite of the spirit of independence and of protest against external authority which we notice in his teachings, was not altogether free from the influences of the customs and traditions, of the current moral ideas and social institutions of his age, although he made an earnest effort to purify and elevate them, to make them consistent with his higher spiritual ideal and to minimise their evil tendencies and effects. Unfortunately the materials for a study of the moral and social surroundings of our Poet are not so full and abundant as in the case of the religious atmosphere but the large number of references with regard to moral ideas and the psychology and metaphysics of moral life that we find in the Gītā is sufficient to enable us to draw a picture of the background of our poem.

---

## SECTION II

### DARK SIDE OF THE PICTURE OF SOCIAL LIFE

As to the various classes of people that existed in the society during the age of our author, we have

already noticed the types of pious and devout men, of sages and seers, of *Yogis* and *Bhaktas*, who gave a healthy lead and direction to the activities of the masses, who elevated the religious tone and atmosphere of the society by their ideals and precepts, by their lives and examples. But to have a complete view of the social surroundings of our poet, we must place side by side with these wise men and devotees, the other side of the picture as well, representing the vilest and the most wicked people of the time. The *Gītā* gives a long description of certain classes of men who are said to be possessed of demonical spirit or devilish nature. We can imagine from the way in which they have been condemned in the text how the existence of such people in the society offended the moral susceptibilities of our poet and pained his higher nature. These men of devilish disposition, we are told, know neither right activity nor right abstinence, nor cleanliness nor manners nor truth is in them, they consider the universe to be without reality, unfounded, and without God, brought about by mutual union and caused by lust and nothing else. Holding this view, these malevolent people of small understanding and of fierce deeds, themselves ruined, proceed forth for the destruction of the world. Given to insatiable lust, possessed with vanity, pride and arrogance, holding evil ideas through delusion, they engage in action with impure resolves, surrendering themselves to unbalanced thoughts, ending in destruction, regarding the gratification of desire as the highest, taking for certain that "this is all", held in bondage by

a hundred ties of expectation, given over to lust and hunger, they strive to obtain by unlawful means hoards of wealth for sensual enjoyments. "This has been won by me to-day, that purpose I shall gain, so much I have, so much more wealth shall be mine in future, I have slain this enemy, others, too, I shall slay, I am the lord, the enjoyer am I, I am perfect, powerful and happy, I am wealthy, well-born, who else is like unto me? I will sacrifice, I will give alms and I will rejoice,"—say they. Thus deluded by unwisdom, bewildered by numerous thoughts, enmeshed in the web of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desire, they fall into a foul hell. Self-glorifying, stubborn, filled with pride and intoxication of wealth, they perform nominal sacrifices for ostentation, contrary to scriptural rules. Given over to egotism, power and insolence, lust and wrath, these malicious ones hate God in the bodies of others and of their own. These haters—evil, pitiless, vilest among men in the world—are ever thrown down into demonical wombs, where, deluded birth after birth, they sink into the lowest of depths (G. XVI. 7-20).

52. Besides these men of demoniacal qualities, two other classes of wretched people are singled out by the author of the Gītā for a severe and unreserved condemnation, viz the sceptics and unbelievers. For instance, the verse G. IV. 40, tells us, "the ignorant and faithless, doubting self goeth to destruction. nor this world nor that beyond, nor happiness is there for the doubting self." Again in G IX 11-12, we read.—"The foolish disregard God taking human form, ignorant of

His superior nature, as the great lord of beings ; they are empty of hope, empty of deeds, empty of wisdom, senseless, partaking of deceitful, brutal and demoniacal nature " It will be seen from the description of these wicked or evil natures, that the prevalent moral judgment of the age passed a verdict of strong disapprobation or censure on the atheists, sceptics and materialists, no less than on the hedonists and utilitarians of the egoistic and sensualistic character Thus religious faith and belief in God were held to be supreme virtues, while study of scriptures, penances, alms-giving and performance of one or the other variety of sacrifices were enjoined as moral duties; the renunciation of which through delusion, born of darkness, was considered to be improper, (G XVIII 3-8) This can be explained by the fact that in those days there was no sharp line of division drawn between morality and religion, as is done at present, and the same act could be viewed as moral or religious from different points of view So we can safely assume that the social environment of the poet encouraged the type of morality which was predominantly religious, and inculcated a type of religious life which was essentially moral

53 It follows from the ethico-religious character of the environment as a corollary that the tendencies and dispositions of the people of the time were towards a better and fuller understanding of the nature of duty or of moral law as a necessary constituent of their religious conception of God and His relation to men, and towards finding an effective mode of ethical discipline

or religious practice, by which the Summum Bonum of human life could be most easily and surely attained. That this was in fact the actual condition and the real spirit of the people of those times will be clear from the nature of the questions put by the poet in the mouth of Arjuna, and from the whole system of ethical teaching, contained in the *Gītā*, as we shall see.

---

### SECTION III.

#### TYPES OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION.

54 When we turn to the types of family life and social organisation that prevailed in the age of the *Gītā*, we must confess that the materials before us are not sufficient to enable us to form even an incomplete picture of the actual state of things. We learn from the verses G IV 13 and G XVIII 41-44 that four principal castes of the social order of the Hindus had already evolved, but it is doubtful if they had yet acquired their hereditary character, as these divisions are said to be created by God according to the differences of qualities and actions, born of their own nature. Thus the duties of Brahmins according to their innate nature and disposition consisted of severity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, uprightness, wisdom, knowledge, and belief in God while Ksatriyas were characterised by the inborn qualities of prowess, valour, firmness,

dexterity, not flying from the battle, generosity and air of lordship. To Vaiśyas were assigned the duties of cultivation, protection of kīne, and trade, while Śūdras were charged with the duty of attendance or service. We can also gather from the verses G IX. 32-33, that the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas held a high rank in society as the cultured classes of those days, and that even in matters relating to spiritual discipline, preferential treatment was accorded to them as a rule, while the Vaiśyas and Śūdras were condemned to a very low position. That women as a class held a subordinate position is also hinted at in the verse G IX 32, where women equally with the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, are placed on the same footing with those who are of the wombs of vice. It appears that the duties of each caste were rigidly fixed in those days, and any violation on the part of an individual of the duty proper to his caste was not only condemned by his fellows and met with a social opprobrium, but was regarded as a sin against God, for which one was liable to suffer penalty in hell or at least the forfeiture of the bliss of heaven. The social and religious sanctions attached to the performance of one's caste-duties are clearly mentioned in the Gītā II 31-36, where Arjuna is asked to fight in consideration of his own duty as Kṣatriya, for, "There is nothing more welcome to a Kṣatriya than righteous war. Happy are the Kṣatriyas who obtain such a fight, offered unsought as an open door to heaven. But if thou wilt not carry on this righteous warfare, then casting away thy own duty and thy honour, thou wilt incur sin." will

recount thy perpetual dishonour, and to one highly esteemed, dishonour exceedeth death. The great generals and chariot-warriors will think thee fled from the battle from fear, and thou, that was highly thought of by them, wilt be lightly held. Many unseemly words will be spoken of thee by thy enemies, slandering thy strength. What would be more painful than that? Slain, thou wilt obtain heaven" etc. etc.<sup>1</sup>

55. What is said here of the Ksatriyas was true of other castes as well, for the Gītā lays repeated emphasis on the performance of one's *Swadharma* or one's own duty, meaning, as it still means to an orthodox Hindu, the duty proper to one's position in society i.e. caste-duty. Thus we are told, better is one's own duty, though destitute of merit, than the duty of another, however well discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own duty, the duty of another is full of danger (G III. 35)<sup>2</sup>. Again the enumeration of the duties of the various castes according to their nature or quality is followed by the remarks. "Man reacheth perfection by each being intent on his own duty. A man reacheth success by worshipping the all-pervading God in his own duty. Better is one's own duty, though destitute of merits, than the well-executed duty of an-

1. It is doubtful, however, if these verses may be regarded as interpolations or genuine parts of the Epic Gītā

2. From the abrupt manner in which this verse has been introduced here without necessary connection with the context, I am inclined to suspect that it is an interpolation.

other He who doeth the duty laid down by his own nature incurreth not sin ". Congenial duty, even though defective, ought not to be abandoned, all undertakings indeed are clouded at the outset by defects as fire by smoke " (G XVIII 45-48). All this is indication of a social organisation based on status and tradition, each individual being required to fulfil certain duties assigned to him by virtue of his birth in a particular stratum or class of society.

56 This hereditary basis of a man's duty is however fundamentally at variance with the teachings of the Gītā, according to which all men are responsible to God for their action and are to be judged in accordance with the eternal and universal laws of disinterested duty, and salvation freely comes at the door of everyone that earnestly serves and sincerely loves the Supreme Soul, without any regard for caste or sex We are therefore led to accept one of the following alternatives in respect of the interpretation of these verses, viz *either* (i) the verses implying a rigid caste system on a hereditary basis must be regarded as interpolations, *or* (ii) they must be so interpreted as not to conflict with the Gītā ideal of universal religion, enjoining equality, toleration and harmony among men , and in the case of the latter interpretation being accepted, (iii) *either* the verses indicate a state of society in which the caste rules prevailed too strongly to be disturbed by the conservative poet of the Gītā, who was consequently of a compromising attitude towards the problem of castes, leaving the social order and its caste-organisation untouched and enjoin-

ing men to do the duties required by their caste-rules in a religious spirit, or (iv) they must be taken as sure and certain proofs of our poet's rational understanding and spiritual insight into the meaning of these customs of society, and of his critical analysis of the various classes into which a perfect social organisation would be naturally grouped according to a just division of labour, and his ethical interpretation of the duties that should be assigned to each and every member of these classes, thus preparing the way for a better and higher view of the social order and of the time-honoured traditions, and gradually moulding the public opinion through mild disapproval and polite condemnation in a way that would lead to the final rejection and disappearance of the caste distinctions and inequalities. I am decidedly in favour of accepting the second and the fourth of these alternatives as truly representing the essential standpoint of the *Gītā* and as entirely in conformity with the spirit of its religious and philosophical ideal. For we find in these verses relating to the caste-duties etc exactly the same attitude, the same mode of handling, and the same point of view on the part of our author as in his treatment of the Vedas, the sacrifices, and the gods, which was noticed in connection with the religious environment of our poet.

57 We may observe that the bearing of these verses on the proper understanding of the social and moral environments of the author of the *Gītā* cannot be exaggerated. As the treatment of the gods, the Vedas, and the sacrifices, so also the reference to the four

castes and to the duties assigned to them in the Gita signifies, according to our interpretation, that on the one hand society was broadly divided into four principal castes (*varnas*) with certain specific duties assigned to each, and this division tended to become rigidly and inviolably fixed on a hereditary basis, and that on the other hand, currents of thought and movements of reform in the social and religious world were already manifesting themselves in the environment, upholding a higher ideal and a better mode of culture, based chiefly on monotheistic worship and devotional fervour, which threatened to weaken, if not to shake off, the fetters of the caste-rules, and which attempted to discover the inner meaning of the duties of castes and thereby to give a new turning to the social organisation. In other words, as in the sphere of religion, so in matters of morality, the social surroundings of the poet favoured a loftier conception of duty and a more inward and spiritual view of the social relationship in the organised life of the community, and the *Gītā* must be regarded as a natural outcome of this higher idealistic movement

58 If we accept the first chapter of the *Gītā* as a genuine product of our author, and not as a later addition made by the epic draskeuasts at the time of the insertion of our poem in the Mahabharata with a view to adapting the text of the original Gita to its new surroundings (viz the scene of the battle of Kuruksetra), we can say something more important and more definite with regard to the social and moral life of the Hindus in those

days. Arjuna's horror at the thought of killing his kith and kin and his preference of death to the enjoyment of sovereignty over the three worlds at the cost of near and dear relations, like fathers and sons, grandfathers, paternal and maternal uncles, grandsons, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law, teachers and others (G I 33-35), imply a refinement of feeling, delicacy of sentiments, and tenderness of emotions, which could be possible only in a highly developed social life, in which the sanctity of tribal unity and the institution of family were respected and valued above everything else. That the joint-family system and the tribal organisation of life had attained a wonderful complexity of structure and stability of type in those days cannot be doubted by anyone who is familiar with the Epic literature of India, but the Gītā supplies the clue with the help of which we can understand the inner motives which prompted the fulfilment of family and social duties, and the external and internal sanctions which were attached to the violation of these family customs and tribal traditions. For we learn from the verses G I 36-45 that killing relatives or friends even in a battle was considered to be a sin, a vice or a moral guilt, inasmuch as the destruction of a family involved the evils of a serious character and of a far-reaching consequence. For instance, at the extinction of a family, the immemorial family traditions perish, on the dying out of the traditions, lawlessness overcomes the whole family, owing to the predominance of this lawlessness, the women of the family become corrupt; women corrupted, there arises

caste confusion, due to promiscuity, this confusion of castes draggeth to hell the slayers of the family and the family, for their ancestors fall, deprived of rice-balls and libations By these caste-confusing misdeeds of the slayers of the family, the ever-lasting caste-rules and the family customs are abolished Thus the men, whose family customs are extinguished, are condemned to everlasting hell

59 Now, this long tale of grief put in the mouth of Arjuna tells us more than what meets the eyes It throws a flood of light on the existing customs and prevalent traditions of the contemporary society A sociologist might derive a good deal of materials in support of Eugenics from this defence of the purity of family connection and of the observances of caste-rules A student of moral science may discover here the origin of the early customs and traditions of society in the religious necessity of pleasing or saving the spirits of the departed ancestors as well as in that of avoiding the uncomfortable and painful experience of being cast into hell, and one may thereby establish the intimate connection between morality and religion in the primitive stages of human society It gives us, moreover, a glimpse into the dread of the ancients against the disastrous consequences of a war, the most deplorable and harmful of which was believed to be, as it is even in the modern age, the corruption of society arising from the promiscuous social relations in consequence of a marked decline in the total male population of the race at the end of a war. Besides, we learn that the custom of offering

rice and other substances to the departed ancestors, which is observed by the Hindus to this day in the religious rites of *Sráddha* and *tarpana*, was not only prevalent in those days but also had a strong hold on the minds of the higher classes. Again, what strikes us most in this scene of Arjuna's hesitation and weakness in the midst of the battlefield is the fact that even in those days the group-consciousness and tribal fellow-feeling, regard for relations and personal affections were uppermost motives of action in the minds of the best of men and of the bravest heroes, and that these feelings and ideas swayed all other considerations of duty enjoined by the caste-rules or by one's standing in society or station in life.

57

60 From this circumstance alone one should not jump into the conclusion that the caste organisation at the time was just in the forming and had not as yet assumed the predominance in the social structure that it gained in subsequent ages, and that the specific duties arising from the fact of one's belonging to a particular caste were therefore not so highly obligatory and the motives for fulfilling them were not so strong as to assert themselves and to gain an ascendancy over one's natural instincts and emotions. For, this momentary weakness may have been ascribed to Arjuna by the Poet only with a view to creating an opportunity or to finding an occasion for the lofty moral, religious and philosophical discourses that follow. But still one cannot help remarking that the tribal self-consciousness of the people and the social morality of the times found a more effective

expression in ancestor-worship and in the tender feelings towards kith and kin, in an almost superstitious and religious reverence for one's elders and preceptors, in a hatred of war and all its attendant evils, which bring about corruption in the family and confusion in the caste, and thereby degenerate the race and undermine the social order. It appears that as compared with these motives or factors in the moral and social life, the duties of one's caste were given only a subordinate place. In any case, one thing is certain. Religion was in those days, as it is to-day, the centre of moral life and the pivot around which all the institutions of family and the structure of society of India were made to turn. And this is apparent from the repeated appeals that we find in the *Gītā* to popular religious beliefs (e.g., in heaven and hell and in gods) and to faith in God and future life, or in the immortality of the soul, as motives to the fulfilment of moral duties (G I 41, 43, II 8, 11-13, 27-29, 32-37 etc.)

61 Sanctity of immemorial traditions, and religious duty of observing time-honoured customs even on the part of those men of culture and wisdom who were morally and spiritually far above the ordinary level, and for whom therefore these customs and traditions had no meaning and value, constitute another feature of the moral and social environments of the poet of the *Gītā*. It is interesting to find how the *Gītā* correctly represents in this respect the current ideas and sentiments of the contemporary people and at the same time tries to raise them to a higher level by attaching condi-

tions and enjoining restrictions in conformity with the loftier ideal of its teachings as regards practical duties. Thus we read in the third chapter of the poem "Janaka and others indeed attained to perfection by action thus having an eye to the welfare of the masses also, thou should perform action The standard he (the leader) setteth up, by that people go There is nothing in the three worlds that should be done by me, nor anything unattained that should be attained, yet I take to action For, if I did not constantly engage myself in action, men all around would follow my path All people will fall into ruin, if I did not perform action , I should be the author of confusion of castes and should destroy these creatures As the ignorant act from attachment to action so should the wise act without attachment, desiring the welfare of the people Let no wise man unsettle the mind of the ignorant people attached to action, but performing all duties in harmony with God, let him induce other people to act (G III 20-26) The men of perfect knowledge should not unsettle the foolish whose knowledge is imperfect (G III 29) Having known this, our forefathers, ever seeking liberation, performed action , therefore do thou also perform action as did our forefathers in the olden time " (G IV 15)

62 It is necessary to observe here that during the age of the Gītā, two conflicting ideals of acquiring knowledge and performing worldly and religious duties, or contemplation and action, had divided the students of religious culture or seekers after spiritual life into two opposing camps, and the followers of the former

ideal tended to break away from the traditions of the society and to renounce the customary rites and ceremonies, as is clearly evident from the questions of Arjuna and the burden of Krsna's teachings in the *Gītā* III. 4 V. 1-5 XVII. 1, XVIII. 1-7. It was to counteract these tendencies and to maintain the established order of society with its time-honoured customs and ancient traditions, hallowed by the observance of generations of ancestors, that the conservative instinct of our poet was roused and his eloquent voice, full of emotional fervour, was raised.

63 If we analyse the arguments by which the performances, and not renunciations, of the prescribed duties, including customary observances and traditional rites, are defended by the author, they resolve themselves into the following factors (1) Respect for fore-fathers who are entitled to show us the way and lead us by their examples, (2) regard for the public welfare, (3) necessity of guiding the conduct of the ignorant masses by the example of the wise and great men, (4) fear of confusion and lawlessness overtaking society in consequence of non-observance of these customs, (5) freedom from attachment as the redeeming feature in the doings of the man of perfect knowledge, the absence of which alone vitiates and misguides the actions of the ignorant people. How strong a hold the existing order of things and the prescribed duties of society had on the minds of such seers as the Poet of the *Gītā*, and how the philosophical and religious views even of the greatest thinkers were apt to be influenced and guided by

the public opinion and prevalent types of thoughts and actions of the age cannot be better illustrated than by the manner in which this liberal free-thinking writer of our text accommodated himself to the current beliefs and practices of his society, and at the same time made earnest efforts to introduce reforms by way of purifying the motives and elevating the hearts of those who had to conform to the customs and traditions of the age. The following verses will speak for themselves :—

"He who, having cast aside the ordinances of Scriptures followed the promptings of desire, attained not to perfection nor happiness, nor the highest goal. Therefore let the Scriptures be thy authority in determining what ought to be done or what ought not to be done. Knowing what hath been declared by the ordinances of the Scriptures thou oughtest to work in the world." G. XVII. 23-26. "The acts of sacrifice, gift, and austerity, as laid down in the ordinances, are to be performed for the sake of God and uttering the names of God 'A' : 'T' : 'S' without aiming at fruits and in perfect faith." G. XVII. 24-25. Again "Actions should be relinquished as an evil. declare some thoughtful men : acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be relinquished say others. Hear my conclusions as to that relinquishment. Acts of sacrifice, gift, austerity should not be relinquished but should be performed : sacrifices, gift and austerity are the purifiers of the thoughts. But even these actions should be done, leaving aside attachment and fruits.—that is my certain and best belief. Verily renunciation of actions that are

prescribed is not proper, the relinquishment thereof from delusion is said to be of darkness. He who relinquisheth an action from fear of physical suffering, thinking it to be painful, thus performing a passionate relinquishment, obtaineth not the fruit of renunciation. He who performeth a prescribed action saying it ought to be done, renouncing attachment and also fruit, that renunciation is regarded as pure" (G XVIII. 3-6).

64. The question that naturally presents itself for our solution at this stage is, whether the Poet's emphasis on the imperative necessity of observing the customs and traditions of society and his tacit or express disapproval of relinquishing the prescribed duties of sacrifice, charities and austerities, clearly indicated in the passages just quoted, are to be regarded as symptoms of an unbelieving and materialistic age, when people had lost faith in these prescribed modes of moral discipline and even begun to honour customs and traditions more by their breaches than by their observances. In our view these verses may be taken to imply a condition of society in which there were two classes of people moving in opposite directions, both committing the errors of following the extreme and running to an excess in their own way, viz the one class blindly and mechanically going the round of customs without understanding or caring to understand their meanings, and thus performing prescribed duties either in a lifeless and heartless fashion, or what is worse, with a hedonistic motive, seeking selfish end of popularity in the world or place of honour in heaven (G XVI. 15-17, G XVII 12-13,

18-19, 21-22, G. XVIII. 24): and the other class equally blindly resorting to self-mortifications and ascetic practices and foolishly renouncing the world while their minds were still impure and passionately attached to all the objects of desire. (G. III. 6. 33. G. VI. 1-2 G. XVII. 5-6). An examination of the various passages in the Gītā as well as the general trend of its teachings convinces us beyond doubt that the object of the author was to correct the tendency and the attitude of both these classes of people by striking a golden note of the *via media*, and reconciling the two conflicting ideals through a proper understanding of their deeper unity and through a right observance of the truer spirit of rationalism underlying them both. This reconciling and harmonising method of the Poet of the Bhagavad-Gītā meets us throughout the text and will be found to be the central theme of the poem and the unique and essential character of its doctrines, philosophical and religious

#### SECTION IV.

##### FOUR STAGES OF LIFE (*Āśramas*)

65. It may be observed that the Gītā nowhere mentions the Hindu institution of four Āśramas or orders of life which together with that of four castes or Varnas has dominated the entire history of the religious litera-

ture and spiritual culture of the Indians and formed one of the strongest pillars of the social structure of the Hindus. It is really remarkable that while the four *Varnas* (castes) are mentioned by name and their duties are enumerated and classified with the oldest traditions and ordinances, there is not a single verse in the *Gītā* to indicate that the four orders of Āśramas existed, were recognised or even were in the formation in the society of that age. We have before us a large variety of modes of discipline and culture in the moral and religious life; we are told about the way of knowledge and the way of action, the path of fulfilment of duties and the path of renunciation, we have the questions of choosing between the worship of the immanent and the impersonal Absolute and that of the transcendent and personal God, of preference among the various seekers after spiritual life, like the wise and the devotee, the man of action and the man of contemplation (*Jnānī*, *Bhakta*, *Karmī*, *Muni* or *Yogī*) or among the abstainers or renouncers and the ascetic and the austere practisers of penances (*Tyāgī*, *Sanyāsī*, *Tapasvinī*), we find the ideal men described as "one who abides in wisdom" (*Sthitaprajña*) or as "one who is above the qualities" (*Gunatīta*) (G VI 46, G. III. 3, V 2-5, G VI G VIII. 17 G XIII. G. XVIII G II 54, G XVI 21), lastly we have a more elaborate classification of the sacrifices, charities and penances and even of systems of diet prevalent in those days. But what one does not find in the *Gītā* is just the enumeration and description of the four orders or the stages of life viz. (1) that of a student or disciple,

practising self-restraint and observing the vow of continence, (2) that of householder, leading family life and performing duties in the world. (3) that of retiring to the forest and devoting oneself to quiet study and meditation in solitude and (4) that of renouncing the world altogether (Brahmacarva. Gārhasthya. Bānaprastha and Yati).

66. This is all the more remarkable because Manu, who is supposed by Garbe and many other scholars of the west to have lived earlier than the author of the Gītā, has not only mentioned the four Āśramas together with Varnas as the foundation of his social order, but given us a very definite and elaborate formulation of the duties assigned to each of the Āśramas in his Law-codes. If the author of the Gītā quoted any verse from the Manu, as some European scholars seem to hold (e.g. as regards the verse G. XIII. 17), it is inexplicable why this time-honoured institution of Āśramas systematically worked out by the latter should not have been so much as mentioned by the former. Accepting the views of Telang that the Gītā was composed earlier than the Manusamhitā, I might use this circumstance, viz the absence of any mention in the Gītā of the institution of Āśramas which occupies a prominent place in the Manusamhitā, as an additional argument to support and confirm my position. But such an instance of omission is by itself of little or no value for a scientific and critical study of our poem, unless it is strengthened by reference to other similar works of antiquity, in which the institution of Āśrama is either directly mentioned or indirectly implied.

67. The word *Āśrama* itself occurs for the first time in the Upanisadic literature, namely in the Śvetāśvatara Up VI. 21 and the Maītrāyani Up IV. 3, but the names or words indicating or implying the orders of Brahmacārin, Grhastha, Sannyāsi, Yati, Paribrājaka etc. (i e. the stages of student's life, house-holder's life, anchorite's life, ascetic life etc) or their equivalents are met with singly or in conjunction with each other in some of the oldest Upanisads, e g. Chāndogya Up. VIII 5, II 23, V. 10, Brhadāranyaka Up. IV. 3, 22 III. 8, 10. It is to be noted that the three stages mentioned in the Chāndogya Upanisad II 23, I. are not consecutive, and in V. 10 as well as in II 23. I the three stages are contrasted with the highest state of worshipping Brahman.

68. Similarly in the passages of the Brhadāranyaka Up, the knower of Brahma is contrasted with those who study, sacrifice, give alms, or are anchorites. But in Jābāla Up. IV. (and the Mundaka Up. II 1, 7) the fourth *āśrama* is expressly mentioned and has already become an independent order (vide Deussen's Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, 60, 376 etc, Macdonel and Keith's Index of Vedic Names etc). Now, if we turn to the Gītā, it will not be difficult to pick up words and verses in the body of the Poem which imply or even refer to one or the other of the four *āśramas*. The vow of Brahmacarya as the characteristic of the Yogi, and practising of Brahmacarya as a means to the attainment of Brahma are expressly mentioned in the Gītā VI 14, and VIII. 11, the latter being a verse found in common as between the Gītā and the Kaṭha Upaniṣads. (Kaṭha ii,

15). Again, service of the teacher (*Ācārya-upāsanā*) is counted among the numerous virtues and qualities that constitute wisdom (G XIII 8), and this also reminds us of the Hindu Āśrama of Brahmacharya, during which young pupils are required to reside in the house of their preceptors and render all sorts of services to the household of the latter (also cf. G. IV. 34) The term *Sannyāsa* occurs in a large number of passages in the *Gītā*, and bears more than one meaning, and applies as a rule to all performances of duty without attachment and desire for fruits of actions. The true nature and ideal of *Sannyāsa* have been mentioned by name or discussed in details in the following passages of the *Gītā* III 4, 30, V. 1-6 (where the path of renunciation and action are identified respectively with the systems of culture known as *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*) (G V. 13, VI. 1-2, 4 XVIII, 1-2, 7, 49, 57).

69 I may also mention a number of verses in which the life according to *Sannyāsa* is explained without employing the term itself e.g. G III. 17-18 IV. 20-23, V. 7-13, VI. 5-15 etc The term "Yati" is mentioned twice, once in the singular in G IV. 26 and again in the plural form in G VIII. II. The term "Bānaprastha" or *Paribrajyā* or "Prabrajyā" are to be found nowhere in the poem, although the traditional practice of renouncing one's wife and children and home and retiring to the forest at a certain stage of life is as old as the time of Yājnavalkya, the great Philosopher of the Brhadāraṇyaka Up. We have, no doubt, verses in the *Gītā* which seem to imply the desirability, nay the

necessity of cultivating a habit of retiring to a secret place in solitude for the sake of practising Yoga (G. VI. 10), and of being "homeless" as one of the virtues to be possessed by a man who is dear to God (G. IXII 19), and even of remaining perfectly detached from one's son, wife, and home etc and resorting to sequestered places and having a dislike for the company of men as essential constituents of wisdom (G. XIII, 10, 11) But these do not justify us in assuming that the author of the Gītā was familiar with or had sympathy for, what are called the third and the fourth Āśramas of Hindus, as defined by Manu For the practices of renunciation or of retiring to solitary places prescribed in the Gītā are meant to be preliminary disciplines of Yoga, which may have to be resorted to only as temporary measures for attaining the highest mode of spiritual culture, but which ceases to have any necessity for those who have once established themselves in the path of devotion to God.

70 The whole trend of the poem runs counter to the ascetic habits, anti-worldly tendencies, and anti-social practices which have been generated in the minds of the people of India, since antiquity by a morbid religious temperament and by an erroneous ideal of spiritual life The inequitous laws and baneful institutions of the ancient Indian society, which had later on received their most candid expression in a final and systematic form in the hands of Manu, the illustrious law-giver of the Hindus, seem to be partly responsible for the growth of ascetic tendencies It is however to be noted that the poet of the Gītā aims at reconciling the religious spirit

of the performance of worldly duties, and his teachings represent a stage of Indian culture and civilisation when the family life and social relations were not yet regarded as evils in themselves to be set aside, or as fetters of illusion to be cast off, by the seekers after higher life at the very first awakening of the spiritual consciousness or at the very outset of one's moral and religious discipline. Those who are misled by the apparent use of the term 'Sannyāsa' and equally apparent absence of any reference to the duties of a house-holder with regard to the wife and children and other members of the family, forget that even in the Epic Gītā which in our view is later than the Upanisadic Gītā, the teachings of the Gītā are put in the form of a dialogue between two ideal householders of the Epic literature, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and that the scene of the poem is laid in the field of the famous battle of Kurukṣetra, and also that the occasion for the opening of the discourse is given by the problem arising in the mind of a hero face to face with his opponents in the war, not as to whether he should live in the world or renounce it, but rather as to how he should choose between the public duty of fighting required by his position in the social order and the equally sacred duty of loving his relations and kinsmen and respecting their lives.

71. Dr. Bhandarkar was of opinion that 'there was a tendency among the people to give up worldly life and betake themselves to residence in forests and mountains' at the time when the Gītā was composed. But this does not amount to saying that the Hindu institutions of

Bānaprastha and Sannyāsa Āśrama as elaborated by Manu, were the usual order of the day or that the ideal of leading a religious life in the world as a pious and devout householder dedicating all actions to God (as taught in the Gītā) was altogether foreign to the spiritual instincts and traditions of the people in those days. For, as we have seen, different popular modes of worship (e.g. sacrifices, penance, charities, adoration of God etc.) were prescribed by the scriptures and practised by the masses in those days, and even higher processes of moral purification and spiritual elevation, consisting in acquisition of wisdom, disinterested services to fellow-beings, and cultivation of love and devotion to God both singly and in congregation, were not denied to the householders performing worldly duties of looking after the family and practising the virtues of domestic and social life, as we have seen in the last chapter.

72 But the words Brahmacarya, Sannyāsa, Yati etc do not seem to convey the same connotations in the Gītā that they have in the technical system of Āśramas defined by Manu, nor is there any indication of the actual existence of these different classes or orders in society or practical observance of the four āśramas by the religious men of the age in successive stages of their life as is demanded by Manu. On the other hand, there is every resemblance between the Gītā and the old Upanisads as regards the use of the terms connoting the various Āśramas and also as to their upholding of a spiritual ideal which enjoins self-renunciation and self-dedication in the service of God at every stage of life, whether one is

a student or a householder, and which thus combines the last two stages with the first two. For example, according to Manu the householder has to perform sacrifices to give alms etc. and anchorites and ascetics are required to renounce all actions. But the Gītā recognises no such hard and fast line of division, and requires as much renunciation from the householder as it demands the practice of one or the other mode of sacrifice from even the ascetics. This will be evident if we compare G. III 4, 30, G. IV. 20-23 etc setting forth the ideal of sannyās for all, with IV. 24-33 which spiritualises sacrifice to an extent that makes even the path of knowledge one of the highest modes of sacrifice IV. 33\*. In other words, in the Gītā as in the older Upanisads one and the same ideal combining in itself devotion to the supreme spirit and performance of duties without any attachment and renunciation of all fruits of action in the spirit of self-dedication to God, manifests itself as the goal of spiritual life and thus dispenses with the necessity of recognising or introducing an elaborate division of the life of an individual into the various āśramas or stages. All these considerations lead me to believe that the Gītā was prior in origin to the Manu Samhitā. Further the absence in the Gītā of any rigid and fixed rules for regulating the human life after the fashion of the four āśramas

\*The State of homelessness is extolled in many Upanisads.  
e.g. Br. Up. IV, 4. 22 etc.

of Manu seems to indicate that the earlier the origin of a moral and religious treatise of the Hindus, and the older the society in which it arose, the loftier and purer the ideals and institutions of life represented by it.

---

### *SECTION V.*

#### MORAL IDEAS—MOTIVES OF ACTIONS—STANDARD OF MORAL JUDGMENT.

73 The prevalent moral ideas of the society in which the Poet of the *Gītā* was born and brought up may be gathered from the motives which are actually professed and explicitly stated to be the ground of action on the part of Arjuna and which also dictated the lines of conduct upheld by Krsna, the teacher of our dialogue (We have already seen how) Arjuna was almost horrified at the idea of fighting with his kith and kin and preferred death to possession of a kingdom at the cost of his near relatives The moral considerations underlying this hesitation of Arjuna are found on analysis to consist in (i) a clear idea of tribal self-consciousness (*G. I. 28–38*), (ii) regard for one's blood-relations, (iii) sense of sin at the destruction of lives, especially of those who are descended from the same race or connected by social relations, (*G. I. 44–45*), (iv)

thought of the sociological and eugenic effects of the evils of war (G. I. 39—43); (v) superstitious fear at the idea of ancestors not receiving any offering from their descendants who would be eliminated or become extinct as a consequence of the disastrous battle (G. I. 42—43). As against these moral and religious considerations which overwhelmed Arjuna on the eve of the war, Krsna urged the following points in the second chapter which in a way summarise the various arguments in favour of the performance of duty advanced throughout the poem —(I) Reflective considerations (the way of Sāṅkhya) like (a) the idea of immortality of the soul in the midst of the continuous changes and the destruction of the body (G. II. 11—25), (b) the thought of the certainty of death for the born and of birth for the dead, leading to a spirit of submission to the inevitable (G. II. 26—30), (c) the conception of fulfilling the duty imposed on one by one's station in life or position in society e.g. duty of fighting in a righteous war, proper to a Kṣattriya, this last including a sense of one's dignity, regard for public opinion or social praise and blame, and also the theological sanction of a reward in heaven and a punishment in hell (G. II. 31—37). (II) Considerations of the ideal of action (the way of Yoga), (viz.) (a) acting without regard for the consequences, (b) without passion or attachment, (c) with the understanding fixed in pure reason, (d) having perfect equanimity of mind in success and failure, (e) and thus dwelling in union with the Divine or abiding in Brahmā (G. II. 47—53, 35—59, 62, 70—72).

78. These discourses in the first two chapters of the *Gītā* give us in a nutshell the moral conception that dominated the age of the author and influenced the conduct of his contemporary people. We thus get from these passages a faithful and accurate representation of the *ethos* of the ancient Indian society and learn how the ideas of morality were inseparably intermingled with popular religious beliefs and practices on the one hand, and with higher intellectual elements of psychology and metaphysics on the other hand. It is however, to be remarked that while the *Gītā* nowhere expressly throws into contrast or sets in opposition with each other, the ideas of the good and the pleasant (*Sreya* and *Preya*) as is done by the sage of the *Katha Up* or by the Greek Philosophers for instance, we find in our poem a repeated and at the same time unambiguously vehement condemnation of the hedonistic motives and ideas and ideals of action, (G II. 42-44, G XVI. 10-17), including even the mechanical performance of religious rites or blind observance of customs or traditions with a view to enjoying pleasures in the next world. On the other hand, the highest state of Yoga or Action in unison with the Divine Reason and Will is always held to be the most pleasant, and productive of bliss and joy and peace of the soul (G II 53, 64-66, G. VI, 15 G V. 21, 23-24). Then again, although we meet so often with supernatural beliefs in the future life and rebirths, and in Heaven and Hell in connection with the moral conduct enjoined in the *Gītā*, the greatest emphasis is on the religious ideal of faith in God and loving service

and devotion to Him (G I 61, 72, G III 30, G V 10, 20, 21, 24, G VI 14, 15, 29-30 G IX 34. G. XVIII. 56, 65-66 G XII 7 ).

74. Turning now to the problems of moral life that arose in the minds of earnest disciples or enquirers in the age, we have already noticed that there were two ideals of life and two corresponding modes of moral culture and discipline competing in those days, viz the ideal of knowledge and the path of reflection or meditation on the one hand, and the ideal of duty and the path of action on the other Side by side with discussions on these two ideals and methods, there arose the questions of the genesis and the growth of the evil impulses or propensities in men and the means of overcoming them successfully and completely Thus we meet with a moral psychology of the gradual evolution of vicious tendencies and the various steps through which the mastery of the self can be regained and a philosophical conception of the hierarchy of elements in the inner republic of our mental life in such passages of the Gītā as the following —

(1) Man musing on the objects of sense, conceiveth an attachment to these , from attachment ariseth desire , from the desire anger cometh forth , from anger proceedeth delusion , from delusion confused memory and destruction of Reason , from destruction of Reason he perishes (G II 62 63 ).

(2) Question—But dragged on by what does a man commit sin, reluctantly indeed, as it were by force constrained ?

Answer. It is desire, it is wrath, begotten by the quality of motion, all-consuming, all-polluting, know thou this as our foe here on earth As a flame is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo is wrapped by the amnion, so this is enveloped by it. Enveloped is wisdom by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire, which is insatiable as a flame. The senses, the mind and the Reason are said to be its seat , by these enveloping wisdom, it bewilders the dweller in the body Therefore, mastering first the senses, do thou slay this thing of sin, destructive of wisdom and knowledge.

It is said that the senses are great , greater than the senses is the mind, greater than the mind is the Reason, but what is greater than the Reason is He Thus understanding Him as greater than the Reason, restraining the self by the Self, slay thou the enemy in the form of desire, difficult to overcome (G III 36-43)

(3) Physiological, physical and psychological elements of the discipline of Yoga are set forth in the verses G. VI 10-19, 24-26

(4) Q This yoga which Thou has declared to be attainable by equanimity, I see not a stable foundation for it owing to restlessness , for the mind is verily restless, it is impetuous, strong and difficult to bend, I deem it as hard to curb as the wind

Ans Without doubt, the mind is hard to curb and restless but it may be curbed by constant practice and dispassion Yoga is hard to attain, methinks, by a self that is uncontrolled , but by the self-<sup>Q</sup> used it is

attainable by properly directed energy (G. VI. 33-36). Then follows a discussion as to the fate of one who fails to attain Yoga during this life by his best endeavours. (G. VI. 37-45).

(5) *Triple is the gate of this hell*, destructive of the self—lust, wrath, and greed, therefore let man renounce these three. A man liberated from these three gates of darkness accomplisheth his own welfare, and thus reacheth the highest goal (G. VI. 21-22).

(6) Good, evil, and mixed—*threesold is the fruit of action* hereafter for the non-relinquisher; but there is none ever for the renouncer (7) These *five causes*, learn of Me as declared in the Sāṅkhyā system for the accomplishment of all actions The body, the actor, the various organs, the diverse kinds of energy and the presiding deities or Fate as the fifth. Whatever action a man performeth by his body, speech and mind, whether right or the reverse, these five are the causes thereof. That being so, he verily who owing to untrained Reason looketh on his Self, which is isolated, as the actor, he, of perverted intelligence, seeth not. (G. XVIII 12-16)

75 The other problems within the sphere of moral conduct that agitated the thinking minds of the age are indicated in the opening verses of the chapters. XVII and XVIII of the Gītā These were :—

(1) Whether one could perform the duties prescribed by the popular religion or time-honoured traditions, casting aside the ordinances of scriptures and yet full of faith?

(2) Whether renunciation involved relinquishment of all actions including the acts of sacrifice, gift, and austerity? We have seen in connection with our study of the religious environment how the Poet of the Gītā found around him a state of society in which sacrifices and other popular modes of spiritual culture were enjoined as regular duties to be performed by all householders and we have also noticed in that chapter (sec 3) how the ancient customs and traditions had to be very scrupulously observed even by the best leaders of the society in those days, not because they believed in them or found them useful for their own moral welfare, but because they wanted to guide the ignorant masses along the beaten tracks, fearing lest the violation of customs and traditions on the part of the wise and pious leaders might confuse the illiterate and lead to social anarchy and disorder. We need not, therefore, feel surprised if these ideas and practices in his moral environment led our Poet to conceive of all moral duties in the light of sacrificial ceremonies and to represent all moral actions as different forms of sacrifices (e.g. G III 9-16, IV 23-33). Nor need we wonder that the Poet of the Gītā, born in such environments, was able to strike a deeper chord of harmony among the various modes of moral discipline and means of ethical culture, and also to give birth to a higher ideal of duty and a loftier conception of the life of action based on self-knowledge and God-consciousness (as we shall see later on).

That a highly developed ethical consciousness combined with a vigorous growth of the intellectual life of

no mean order prevailed in the environments of the author and influenced his moral ideas to no inconsiderable extent—may be easily inferred from the verses of the poem quoted above, which clearly show how a number of subtle and delicate problems of moral psychology and moral philosophy that were arising in the contemporary society have been touched and disposed of in a manner that is peculiar to the genius of our author.

---

## SECTION VI.

### THE IDEAL OF PERFECT MAN

76. A large variety of virtues, duties and other ethical concepts have been presented in rapid succession, and almost every phase of conduct in the life of a moral agent has been subjected to ethical judgment, under the threefold classifications of Sāttvik, Rājasik, and Tāmasic\* (good, middling and bad, or desirable, tolerable and disapprovable), according as they represent or flow from the pure, passionate or dark aspect of human nature.

---

\* Literally, pertaining to Sattva, Rajas and Tamas or the qualities of essence, activity and inertia.

For example, the moral qualities of an ideal wiseman and of a virtuous and devout seeker after spiritual life are enumerated in the following passages —

(a) In G II 55-61, 64-65, 69-72, where the marks of a "Sthitaprajña," i e of "one who constantly abides in reason" have been given, viz renouncing all passions dwelling in the mind, and contented in himself by himself, not agitated by grief or sorrow nor seeking after happiness, free from attachment, fear, and anger, unaffected by good or evil, neither welcoming the agreeable, nor hating the disagreeable, withdrawing all senses from their objects, subduing all lusts, self-controlled, with the senses entirely under restraint, united with God, mastering and disciplining the self, which then moves among sense-objects with senses free from attraction and repulsion, and thereby attains peace, as a result of which all pains are removed, . . . forsaking all desires, free from yearnings, selfless, without egotism, he attains the Eternal abode of Peace in Brahma

(b) G IV 18-23 He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men He is harmonious even while performing all actions, whose works are all free from the moulding of desire, whose actions are burned up by the fire of wisdom , him the wise have called a sage, having abandoned attachment to the fruit of action, always content, nowhere seeking refuge, he is not doing anything although doing actions, hoping for naught, his mind and self controlled, having abandoned all greed, performing action by the body alone, he doth not commit sin : content with whatsoever

he obtaineth without effort, free from the pains of oppositions without envy, balanced in success and failure, though acting, he is not bound. Of one with attachment dead, harmonious, with his thoughts established in wisdom, his works sacrifices, all action melts away.

(c) G V 6-29, VI 7-32 These verses give a description of Yogi or the perfected soul, united with God, and his processes of discipline and culture, *Vide* paras 37-40 supra in Chap. I.

77. (d) (G XII. 13-20) These verses state the characteristics of those who are the beloved of God. "He who beareth no ill-will to any being, friendly and compassionate, without attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, ever-content, harmonious with the self-controlled, resolute, with mind and Reason dedicated to God, he the devotee of God, is dear to Him. He from whom the world, doth not shrink away, who doth not shrink away from the world, freed from joy, anger, fear, and anxiety, he is dear to God. He who wants nothing is pure, expert, passionless, untroubled, renouncing every undertaking, he, the devotee of God is dear to Him. He who neither loveth, nor hateth, nor grieveth nor desireth, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, he is dear to God. Alike to friend and foe, and also in fame and ignominy, alike in cold and heat, pleasures and pains, destitute of attachment, taking equally praise and reproach, silent, wholly content with what cometh, homeless, firm in mind, full of devotion, that man is dear to God. They verily who partake of this life-giving wisdom as taught herein, in-

deed with faith, with God as their supreme object, such devotees are surpassingly dear to Him.

78 (e) (G XIII 8-12) Wisdom is described as consisting of the following virtues —

Humility, unpretentiousness, harmlessness, forgiveness, rectitude, service of the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control, dispassion towards the objects of the senses and also absence of egoism, insight into the pain and evils of birth, death, old age and sickness, unattachment, absence of self-identification with son, wife, or home, and constant balance of mind in wished-for and unwished-for events, unflinching devotion to God by Yoga, without other objects, resort to sequestered places, absence of enjoyment in the company of men, constancy in the rational knowledge of the self, understanding of the objects of ultimate truth or absolute knowledge

79 (f) (G XIV) 19-26 The marks of the wise who have crossed over the three qualities —

When the Seer perceiveth no agent other than the qualities and knoweth that which is higher than the qualities, he entereth into the Divine Nature. When the dweller in the body hath crossed over these three qualities, whence all bodies have been produced, liberated from birth, death, old age and sorrow, he drinketh the nectar of immortality. He who hateth not light (of knowledge) nor outgoing energy, nor even delusion, when present, nor longeth after them, when absent, he who, seated as a neutral, is unshaken by the qualities, who saying, "the qualities revolve" standeth apart immovable : balanced in pleasure and pain, self-reliant, to

whom a lump of earth, rock and gold are alike, the same to loved and unloved firm, the same in censure and in praise, the same in honour and ignominy the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings,—he is said to have crossed over the qualities. And he who serveth God exclusively by the Yoga of devotion, he, crossing beyond the qualities, is fit to become one - with Brahman

80 (g) (G XVI. 1-3). Divine qualities are said to consist of —Fearlessness, purity of life, steadfastness in the Yoga of wisdom, almsgiving, self-restraint and sacrifice and study of the Scriptures, austerity and straightforwardness, harmlessness, truth, absence of wrath, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion to living beings, uncovetousness, mildness, modesty, absence of fickleness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of envy and pride

81 (h) (G XVIII 49-56) How he who hath attained perfection obtaineth the Brahman, that highest state of wisdom is taught succinctly in the following words :

United to the Pure Reason, controlling the self by firmness, having abandoned sound and other objects of the senses, having laid aside passion and malice, dwelling in solitude, abstemious, with speech, body and mind, subdued, constantly fixed in meditation and yoga, taking refuge in dispassion, having cast aside egoism, violence, arrogance, desire, wrath, covetousness, selfless and peaceful—he is fit to become Brahman , serene in the self, he neither grieveth nor desireth, the same to all beings, he

obtaineth supreme devotion unto God By devotion he knoweth Him in essence, who and what He is ; having thus known God in essence, he forthwith entereth into the Supreme Though ever performing all actions, taking refuge in God, by His grace he obtaineth the eternal, indestructible abode

82 Even a casual observer of these passages will recognise the moral earnestness of the Poet and the lofty Ethical Idealism that prevailed in his environments At the same time one cannot help inferring from these various descriptions of the ideal man and his qualities that intellectual and moral virtues were almost identified with piety or devotion in those days, and that no sharp line was therefore drawn between speculative wisdom or theoretical reason on the one hand and the practical wisdom or moral goodness on the other, and that both were regarded to be equally essential requisites for a truly religious man characterised by faith in God and devotion to His service I think this fact in itself may be taken to be another evidence in support of my contention that the Gītā belongs to a period in the history of Indian thought when systematic philosophy, both in its theoretical and in its practical sides, had not yet developed, and when morality, religion and knowledge were indistinguishably intermingled with one another without the slightest suspicion that the province of each could be separately defined and systematically studied

83 We can however assert on the strength of the precisely psychological account of moral life and the highly philosophical conceptions of duty that meet us

in the Gītā that in spite of the pre-systematic and immature thought of the age and the environment to which the Poet of the Gītā belonged, he was gifted not only with a depth of insight that could penetrate into the innermost regions of moral life, but also with a keen intellect that was able to analyse acutely the most complex moral situations and experiences, and to trace the origin, growth, and final consequences of the vicious tendencies of man.

---

### SECTION VII.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF THREE GUNAS

84 That our poet possessed an extra-ordinarily high degree of intellectual ability and had a wonderful talent for systematic philosophical thinking will also be evident from the elaborate formulation of the doctrine of three Gunas or qualities—*sattva* (harmony or purity), *rajas* (motion or passion) and *Tamas* (darkness or inactivity)—in the Chapter XIV of the Gītā, and its practical application in concrete instances viz in the form of moral valuation and classification of the various modes of moral and religious discipline and culture, that we find in the

last two chapters of the poem Almost all the phases of moral life have been brought by our poet under the three-fold classification For example —

(1) The faith of man is said to be threefold by nature in accordance with the inborn disposition of each man , and the objects of worship are said to vary with different types or classes of human nature, and the men who perform severe austerities, unenjoined by the scriptures, wedded to vanity and egoism, impelled by the force of their desires and passions, these fools, tormenting the body and its members, and also mortifying God seated in the inner body are strongly condemned as possessing demoniacal nature (G XVII 2-6)

(2) Then food or system of diet is also classified according to the threefold nature of man, the ideal or the best food being held to be that which augments vitality, energy, vigour, health, joy and cheerfulness and which is delicious, cooling, substantial and refreshing or agreeable to the heart (G XVII 8-10)

Similarly (3) Sacrifices (4) Austerities (5) Charities are classified according to the three-fold qualities and subjected to moral judgment (G XVII 11-21) (6) Then we meet with a definition of "Sat" which implies reality as well as goodness as well as good deeds e g , steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and gift are said to be 'Sat' or good and an action for the sake of the Supreme is also named 'Sat', while oblation, gift, austerity or other deeds—whatsoever is wrought without faith, is called 'asat' or bad, or unreal, as it is nought here and hereafter (G XVII 26-28).

(7) The true meaning of renunciation is explained by distinguishing it from ascetic cessation of all actions, and relinquishment is divided into three classes and judged according to the motives or ends which actuate one (G. XVIII 1-11). We have already mentioned (8) the threefold of fruits of action (9) fivefold causes of action (10) the three-fold impulse to action and (II) the three-fold constituents of action as enumerated in G. XVIII 12-18. Again to complete the list of classification according to three gunas, (12) Knowledge, (13) Action (14) Actor (15) Reason, (16) Firmness (17) Happiness are each in its turn brought under the test of moral valuation, and in each case a stamp of superiority is put on that variety which represents the sattva quality. (18) Finally, the duties of the four castes are also distributed according to the qualities born of their own nature, and we are told that man reached perfection by each being intent on his own duty and by worshipping God through the performance of his own duty (G. XVIII 42-46).

---

## *SECTION VIII.*

### *ETHICS OF THE GīTĀ—SOCRATIC ETHICS COMPARED.*

85 This long list of classifications and divisions and the various attempts at precise definition of ethical concepts in the *Gītā* remind us of the great Socrates, the Father of Ethics and the Founder of Logic in the history of Greek thought As a matter of fact, the system of the *Gītā* represents the same clearness of thought, the same methodical treatment of the subject-matter, the same accuracy of observation and acuteness of analysis of the current moral ideas, the same application of the general principle to concrete experiences of moral life, as are exhibited in the Socratic Ethics What is more, the moral teachings of the *Gītā* are characterised by an unprecedented boldness and originality, and mark an unusual advance beyond the highest achievements of previous thinkers of India in the field of ethical speculations just in the same manner and proportion as the Socratic system of morality excelled the pre-Socratic mode of thinking in Greece Now, this resemblance between the period when the author of the *Gītā* composed this Divine Song and the period of Greek Philosophy when Socrates formulated his ethical system is not without its bearing on the question we are trying to answer. Indeed the parallelism may be extended to other features of the age with advantage For instance, the poet of the *Gītā*, like Socrates, was not concerned so much with Cosmology and Cosmogony, as with the problems of conduct.

and the moral ideal of life, and whatever concept of metaphysics, other than religious ideas, are discovered in the *Gītā* are given a secondary and subordinate place or mentioned rather accidentally, and have therefore to be interpreted in the light of the central purpose of the poem which is primarily moral and religious. It follows also as a corollary from the same phenomenon of likeness between the *Gītāic* and the Socratic modes of thought, that just as in the case of the history of Greek Philosophy Socratic teachings were not comprehensive and coherent enough to deserve the epithet of a full-fledged system of Philosophy, but contained the germs from which the later systems of Plato and Aristotle were developed, so in the case of the history of Indian Philosophy the doctrines of the *Bhāgavatgītā* occupied a place midway between the spiritual intuitions of the Rsis of the Upanisads and the metaphysical speculations of the system-builders so that we must not expect in our poem a fully developed system, but rather discover in it the germs and the pre-requisites of the later schools of systematic thought. We shall confirm the truth of these remarks when we deal with the intellectual environment of our poem in the next chapter. We should note here at the same time that the ethical doctrines of the *Gītā* are so systematic and comprehensive that for this lofty Idealism and exhaustive enumeration and classification of virtues alone, if not for anything else, the Poet deserves as high a place of honour as the European moral philosophers like Aristotle and Kant or Sidgwick and Green,

---

## *SECTION IX.*

### MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THE GITA AND MODERN THOUGHT

86 We have already referred to the Psychology of moral conduct including an account of the Genesis of immoral passions and the means of regulating one's actions in practical life as offered in the *Gītā*, and seen how it represents a high level of intellectual analysis and synthesis as well as a considerable advance in Ethical ideas and spiritual endeavours. Thus the ruin of a man of wicked disposition is traced step by step in a descending order, from the moment he begins to brood over the impure objects of sense in the following manner constant musing on the object generates an inclination towards it, from this inclination there arises a desire, which when frustrated brings with it anger; anger leads to delusion, upon which proceeds confused memory and this in its turn is followed by destruction of Reason, of which death is the inevitable result. But the disciplined self, moving among sense-objects with senses free from attraction and repulsion, mastered by the self, goeth to peace. On that peace being attained, all pains are extinguished and reason is harmonised and established in equilibrium (G II 62—66). Whichever of the sense, wandering among objects, gains ascendancy over the mind, it takes away the understanding just as the gale hurries away a ship upon the waters, when the senses are restrained by the mind in a man his understanding is well-possessed. He attaineth peace into whom

all desires flow as streams into the ocean, which is filled with water, but remaineth unmoved, but one who longs for desired objects never attains peace Whoso forsaketh all desire and goeth onwards free from yearnings, selfless, and without egoism—he goeth to peace (G II 67-71) Desires are thus the root of all moral evils, and the moral teachings of the Gītā have been directed towards the means to the curbing or the elimination of desires.

87 That the intellectual environment of the Poet had already passed from the stage of mere external regulation of behaviour to the higher stage of controlling the inner springs of action, from the restraint of outer movement to the purification of hearts, from the injunction of "thou shalt not steal" to the higher command of "thou shalt not covet", is evident not only from the repeated demands for the freedom of the soul from all desires and passions, from all attachment to actions and desires for fruits, but also from the explicit injunction conveyed through such verses as the following , "Man winneth not freedom from action by abstaining from activity, nor by mere renunciation doth he rise to perfection Nor can anyone even for an instant remain really actionless, for helplessly is everyone driven to act by the qualities born of nature Who sitteth controlling the organs of action, but dwelling in his mind on the objects of the senses, that bewildered man is called dishonest or hypocrite (G III 4-6)

88 It is also remarkable that the Poet while recognising desire and anger to be the causes of vicious actions, has yet shown his penetrating insight into the

deeper regions of inner life by maintaining like the Greek moralists, Plato and Aristotle, that all vices are in a way products of ignorance and therefore involuntary. For, in explaining the origin of sins committed by a man reluctantly and as it were constrained by force, the author of the *Gītā* says, "As a flame is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo is warped by the amnion, so is this self enveloped by desire which is the constant enemy of the wise and hides knowledge of the true self from the agent, by taking possession of his senses, mind and intellect, and thereby subjecting him to a state of bewilderment and confusion in which alone the vicious actions are perpetrated (G III 36—40). And yet the moral responsibility for an action, right or wrong, is fixed by the *Gītā* not on God, but on the moral agent, and the agency or causality of all actions is ascribed to nature in the case of the pure or the noumenal ego of the wise and the Yogi, and to desire for fruits and attachment or egoism and illusion in the case of the ignorant or unharmonised or those who have no self-control. Thus we are told, the Lord of the world produceth not the power of acting, nor action nor the union together of action and its fruit, it is nature that works, the Lord accepteth neither the evil-doing nor yet the well-doing of any. Wisdom is enveloped by un-wisdom, therewith mortals are deluded (G V 14—15). Again, he who is harmonised by Yoga, whose self is purified and conquered, whose senses are controlled, whose self is the self of all beings, although acting, he is not affected. The Yogi who knoweth the essence of things

should think 'I do not anything': while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes he holdeth. the senses move among the objects of the senses. He who acteth placing all actions in Brahma abandoning attachment is unaffected by sin as a lotus leaf by the waters. Yogis having abandoned attachment, perform action only by the body, by the mind, by the Reason and even by the senses for the purification of the self. The harmonised man, having abandoned the fruit of action, attaineth to the eternal Peace. the non-harmonised impelled by desire, attached to fruit, are bound. Mental- ly renouncing all actions, the sovereign dweller in the body resteth serenely in the nine-gated city, neither acting nor causing to act (G. V. 7-13).

Sq. The theory of the Morals underlying this conception of action and moral causality in the *Gītā*, is not unlike the critical analysis of the law of moral life and the philosophical theory of duty and moral law as presented by the philosopher of Königsberg in his Ethical treatise. The distinction between the empirical and noumenal ego, between nature-necessity and freedom of the moral kingdom of ends the consciousness of obligation or moral responsibility of the noumenal self side by side with the conception of inviolable necessity binding all antecedent and consequent actions as causes and effects in the empirical order.—all these fundamental ideas of the moral metaphysics of Kant find their close parallels in and can be logically deduced from, the Ethical system of the *Gītā*. And this in itself is an

abundant proof the lofty moral genius and the high intellectual equipment of our Poet which enabled him to overstep the highest reach of moral and intellectual speculations of the ancient world.

---

## SECTION X

### HIGHEST STATE OF THE SOUL-LIFE— THE IDEAL OR THE RATIONAL SELF

90 Another sign of intellectual advancement in the age of the *Gītā* is to be discovered in the distinction that is made within the Soul-Life between the sensual and the rational, between the external and the internal, and in the superiority given to the latter over the former. Cold and heat, pleasure and pain are due to contact with matter or the external world, and as such they come and go, these transient feelings should be bravely endured (*G VI 14*) The wise are self-sufficient and do not care for any earthly enjoyments, but only seek the life immortal which is beyond the senses. They rejoice in the self, are satisfied with the self and are content with the self, for them there is no work to be done for them there is no interest in things done in

this world, nor any in things not done nor does any object of theirs depend on any being (G III 17-18). They abandon attachment to fruits of action, hope for naught, abandon all greed and perform action by the body only (i.e. their mind remaining unaffected), content with whatsoever they obtain without effort, free from the pairs of opposites, though acting, they are not bound (G IV 20-22) Again the Yogi, whose self is unattached to external contacts and findeth joy in the self, having the self in unison with God by Yoga, is said to enjoy imperishable bliss The wise do not rejoice in the delights that are contact-born, which are verily wombs of pain, having beginning and end He who is able to endure here on earth, ere he is liberated from the body, the force born from desire and passion, he is harmonised, he is a happy man (G V 21-23) This self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency and the withdrawing of the self from external activities and contacts, freedom from physical and sensual pleasures and enjoyments on the part of a wise man or Yogi, as described in the Gītā, reminds us of the passionless sage of the Stoic school of Ethics in Europe But this is only one side and that the *negative* side of the picture, the other i.e. the *positive* side is represented by the following verses,—which clearly hold before us the internal and rational state of bliss enjoyed by the wise, viz. “He who is happy within, who rejoiceth within, who is illuminated within, that Yogi becoming one with Brahman goeth to the Peace of Brahman (G.-V. 24) In the state of Yoga, the mind finds rest, quieted by the practice of Yoga, the Yogi is

satisfied on seeing the self by the self in the self ; he then findeth the supreme delight which Reason can grasp beyond the senses, wherein established he moveth not from Reality (G VI 20—21) In such a high level of spiritual culture the summum bonum of human life is reached, when man does not wish for anything better, when even the greatest sorrow cannot shake him, when all possibility of pain is removed (G VI 22—23). Supreme joy comes to this Yogi, whose mind is peaceful, whose passion is calmed, who is sinless and partakes of the nature of Brahman Having put away all sins, and ever harmonising the self, he thus enjoyeth delightfully the infinite bliss of contact with the Eternal Brahman (G. VI 27—28)

91 Now, an impartial student of the Gītā will recognise in these lines not the Utopian vision of a dreamer, nor the imaginary picture of an unattainable ideal, far less the conceptual construction of an unpractical philosopher, but the natural and spontaneous outpouring of the heart and the faithful and rational account of the actual mystic experiences of a person who combined in himself the spiritual intuition of the great sages and seers of the Upanisads, the religious ecstasies of the saints and mystics of Christendom, the ethical fervour and insight of Plato and Aristotle and the pure dispassionate reasoned thinking of Spinoza and Kant, and that, strangely enough, at an age much earlier than the beginning of Christianity, and even long before the date when Plato, and Aristotle were philosophising in Greece,

---

## *SECTION XI.*

### *PROCESSES OF SELF-CULTURE—PRACTICE OF YOGA.*

92. The psychological training and introspective analysis of our Poet will also be apparent if we cast a glance on the various means of self-culture and mental discipline prescribed in the *Gītā* for the learners of the system of Yoga Sadhan—a brief survey of which has been already given in the preceding chapter. Conquest of the senses, restraint of desires and passions, and control over impulses have always been recognised as essential parts of moral discipline and spiritual culture. But very few teachers have the sympathy and imagination to enter into the feelings of the students, to form an ideal of the difficulties in the path of the latter and the practical sagacity and psychological insight to find out means for the attainment of self-rule and self-mastery and to prescribe a regular system of training for the development of the latent faculties and potential resources of the disciples. The author of the *Gītā* has devoted five chapters (II—VI) to the solution of these pedagogic problems. If the *Gītā* is recognised as a hand-book of spiritual culture and its moral teachings and practical instructions are followed with religious care and faith and devotion by the educated Hindus of the twentieth century, it is more because of the careful prescription of the most helpful modes of ethical discipline and detailed exposition of the practical difficulties and their solution which these chapters of the *Gītā* offer to the beginners.

in the path of self-culture, than for anything else. We shall give only a few instances of the process of mental and moral training as described in the poem Having external contacts excluded, and with gaze fixed between the eye-brows, having made equal the outgoing and ingoing breaths, moving within the nostrils with senses, mind and reason ever controlled, solely aiming at liberation and having for ever cast away desire, fear and passion, the sage is verily liberated (G V 28) For a sage who is seeking Yoga activity is called the means, but when he is enthroned in Yoga, tranquillity is called the means When a man feeleth no attachment either for objects of sense or for actions, renouncing the formative will, then he is said to be enthroned in Yoga Let him raise the self by the self and let not the self be depressed, for verily the self is the friend of the self and the self is also the enemy of the self (G VI 3-5) The Yogi should constantly engage himself in Yoga, remaining in a secret place by himself, with thought and self subdued, free from hope and greed In a pure place, established on a fixed seat of his own, neither very much raised nor very low, made by a cloth, a black antelope skin and *kushagrass*, one over the other,—there having made the mind one-pointed, with thought and the functions of the senses subdued, steady on his seat, he should practise Yoga for the purification of the self Holding the body, head and neck erect, immovably steady, looking fixedly at the point of the nose, with unseeing gaze, the self serene, fearless, firm in the vow of Brahmachari, the mind controlled, thinking on God, devoted to God he

should sit harmonised.' Thus ever united with the self, with the mind controlled, he goeth to Peace, to the Supreme Bliss that abides in God (G. VI 10-15). Verily, Yoga is not for him who eateth too much, nor who abstaineth to excess, nor who is too much addicted to sleep, nor even to wakefulness. Yoga killeth all pain for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, regulated in performing actions, regulated in sleeping and waking. When his subdued thought is fixed in the self, free from longing after all desirable things, then it is said "He is harmonised." As a lamp in a windless place flickereth not, to such is likened the Yogi of subdued thought absorbed in the Yoga of the Self (G VI 16-19). This Yoga must be clung to with a firm conviction and with undesponding mind. Abandoning without reserve all desires born of the imagination by the mind curbing in the aggregate of the senses, on every side, little by little let him gain tranquility by means of Reason, controlled by steadiness, having made the mind abide in the self, let him not think of anything. As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goeth forth so often receiving it in, let him bring it under the control of the self (G VI 23-26). For one whose mind is restless, impetuous, strong, and difficult to bend, and who finds it as hard to curb as the wind, it is not possible to grasp the meaning of Yoga and see the stable foundation of equanimity required for the practice of Yoga. But, says our author, the mind may be curbed by constant practice and by disposition: it is hard to attain, no doubt, by a self that is uncontrollable, but by the self-controlled, it is attainable by properly

directed energy, (G. VI 35-36). Even the unsubdued, whose mind wanders away from Yoga and who fails to attain perfection in Yoga, but who posesseth faith, has a message of hope from the Poet He is not destroyed like a rent cloud, fallen from both the worlds, but having obtained the worlds of the pious in deeds and dwelt there for immemorial years, he who fell from Yoga is reborn in a pure and blessed house or may be born into a family of wise Yogis—a birth which is difficult to obtain in the world There he recovereth the characteristics belonging to the former body and with these he again striveth for perfection By that former habit he is irresistibly swept away,

The Yogi, striving with assiduity, purified from sin, fully perfected through manifold births, reacheth the supreme goal Thus we find that the means to the attainment of Yoga or perfection of culture, prescribed by the Gītā, not only includes certain psychological and physiological processes as preliminary disciplines, but also involves a faith in the future life based on the metaphysical theory of transmigration That the physical basis of mind and the influence of local position, bodily posture, and the physiological conditions of the organism on the mental dispositions and moral training and character of the individual were not unknown to the ancient Indians, but formed an essential element in their educational methods can be gathered from the verses, G V 27, G VI 10-13, 16-17, quoted above as well as from the verses, G VIII 10-13, G XII 6-7, G II G XV 7-9, G XVII 8-11, G XVIII 52— which imply an intimate connection between the mental

and moral life on the one hand and the condition of the physical life and its environments on the other.

The body, the mind and the soul were thus regarded in those days as forming an organic unity, so that the control and discipline of the one was considered to be indispensable to the training and culture of the other, and no spiritual perfection could be acquired by one who neglected the body and its requirements or ignored the physical and physiological aspects of his mental life and environments.

93. We have already seen that there was no hard and fast distinction made in the days of the composition of the *Gītā* between the philosophical, religious and moral consciousness of man and that each was inseparably blended with the other. It is therefore quite natural that the moral disciplines and psychical training presented by our poet for the seeker after spiritual culture or excellence should involve certain metaphysical and religious beliefs concerning God and the soul. We have already mentioned the faith in rebirths as a necessary presupposition of the practice of Yoga.

The highest state of Yoga or spiritual perfection, as described in the *Gītā*, may be represented as follows :—

The self, harmonised by Yoga, seeth the self abiding in all beings and all beings in the self : everywhere he seeth the same (i.e. has equal regard for all) who seeth God everywhere and seeth everything in God, he will never be forsaken by God, nor will he forsake God. He who established in unity, worshippeth God, abiding in all beings that Yogi liveth in God, whatever his mode of

living. He who through the likeness of the soul seeth equality in everything, whether pleasant or painful, he is considered a perfect Yogi. (G. 29-32, VI). A more philosophical and at the same time religious conception of the summum bonum of human endeavours could not be formulated.

94 After so much has been said about the processes of mental training and moral discipline, described in the Gītā, it seems impossible to evade the question of the relation between the Gītā and the system of Yoga Philosophy, ascribed to Patañjali, where the same modes of culture are explained with greater precision in a more scientific manner and also in minute-detail, under the name of Yoga Processes. We, however, reserve the discussion of this important problem for a separate chapter, when references in the Gītā to the various philosophical concepts and terms, current in the contemporary literature of the age, will be taken up

---

## SECTION XII

### SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS AND CLASSIFICATION OF VARIOUS MENTAL AND MORAL CONCEPTS

95. We must notice briefly a few passages in the *Gītā* bearing on the conception of the soul-life, which seem to have a psychological significance. For example, the threefold classifications of pleasure, firmness, reason, knowledge, actor, action, the springs of action, the constituents of actions, five-fold causes of actions, three-fold fruits of actions, three-fold divisions of relinquishment, enumerated in the eighteenth chapter, and the similar classifications of sacrifice, austerity, charity, faith, and systems of diet, found in the seventeenth chapter have simply to be stated in order to convince one of the highly moral and intellectual atmosphere of the age and the speculative disposition of the poet. As many of these verses have already been noticed in connection with one or the other topic dealt with by us, we shall rest content with a few quotations which have an immediate bearing on this section and throw some light on the Psychology and Moral Science of the Hindus.

(1) Three-fold kinds of pleasure —(a) That in which one rejoices habitually and is absolutely removed from the sphere of pain, which at first appears as venom, but in the end as nectar, that pleasure is said to be pure, born of the blissful knowledge of the self.

(b) That which arises from the union of the senses with the objects, and appears at first as nectar, but in

the end like venom, that pleasure is said to be of the Rajas or born of passion

(c) That pleasure which is delusive of the self both at first and afterwards, and which arises from sleep, indolence and heedlessness, that is declared as dark (*tamas*), (G XVIII 36-39)

(ii) Three-fold divisions of firmness —(a) The unwavering firmness by which, through Yoga, one restraineth the activity of the mind, of the life-breathing, and of the sense-organs, that firmness is pure.

(b) That firmness by which one desirous of fruit owing to attachment holdeth fast duty, desire and wealth—is passion-born

(c) That by which one doth not abandon sleep, fear, grief, despair, and vanity—that dull and wicked firmness is dark, (G XVIII 33-35)

(iii) Three-fold divisions of Reason — (a) That which knoweth impulse to activity and inhibition, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation—that Reason is pure

(b) That by which one understandeth not in their true nature, right and wrong and also what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, that Reason is passion-born

(c) That which enwrapped in darkness, thinketh wrong to be right and seeth all things subverted, that Reason is of darkness, (G XVIII 30-32)

(iv) Three kinds of actors—(a) Liberated from attachment, not egoistic, endued with firmness and con-

fidence, unaffected by success or failure—such an actor is called pure :

(b) Impassioned, desiring to obtain fruits of actions, greedy, harmful, impure, moved by joy and sorrow, such an actor is declared passion-born

(c) Unbalanced, vulgar, stubborn, cheating, malicious, indolent, pessimistic, procrastinating—that actor is called dark. (G XVIII. 26-28)

(v) Three-fold varieties of action—(a) An action which is ordained, done by one undesirous of fruit, devoid of attachment without love or hate—that is called pure.

(b) But that action that is done by one longing or done with egoism, or with much effort—that is pronounced passion-born.

(c) The action undertaken from delusion, without regard to capacity and to consequences—loss and injury to others—that is declared to be dark (G XVIII 23-25).

97. (vi) Five-fold causes of actions—(a) the body (2) the actor, (3) the various organs, (4) the diverse kinds of energies, (5) the supernatural or Fate Whatever action a man performeth by his body, speech and mind, whether right or the reverse, these five are the causes thereof, that being so, he, verily, who, owing to untrained reason, looketh on the Self which is isolated as the actor, he, of perverted intelligence, seeth not, (G XVIII. 13-26).

The moral Philosophy of the Author of the Gītā has been largely influenced by these psychological and metaphysical conceptions of five-fold causes and three-

fold divisions of actions, actors, reason, firmness and pleasure, as quoted above

98 (vii) Three-fold divisions of charity—(a) The gift that is made to one who has done nothing beneficial to me, with a sense that gift ought to be made, such a charity which is practised in the right place and in the right time and towards a worthy object is regarded as pure

(b) That given with a view to receiving in return, or looking for fruit, and grudgingly—that kind of charity is known as passionate

(c) A gift that is made disrespectfully and contemptuously to unworthy persons in the wrong place and at the wrong hour,—that is declared of darkness. (G XVII 20-22)

(viii) Three-fold divisions of austerity—(i) Homage paid to the Gods, to the twice-born, to the teachers and to the wise, cleanliness, simplicity, continence, and harmlessness are called the austerity of the body

(ii) Speech causing no annoyance, truthful, pleasant and beneficial, the practice of the study of the scriptures are called the austerity of speech (iii) Mental happiness, equilibrium, silence, self-control, purity of nature,—this is called the austerity of the mind

(a) This three-fold austerity performed by man with the utmost faith, without desire for fruit, harmonised, is said to be pure ; (b) the austerity which is practised with the object of gaining respect, honour and worship, and for ostentations, is said to be of passion, unstable and fleeting ; (c) that austerity done un-

deluded understanding, with self-torture, or with the object of destroying another—that is declared of darkness (G XVII 14-19)

99 (ix) Three-fold divisions of food—(a) The foods that augment vitality, energy, vigour, health, joy and cheerfulness, delicious, bland, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the pure.

(b) The foods that are bitter, sour, satire, over-hot, pungent, dry and burning and which produce pain, grief and sickness—are desired by the passionate (c) That which is stale and flat, putrid and corrupt, remnant and unclean—is the food dear to the dark (G XVII 8-10)

It is hardly necessary to dwell further on the psychological, metaphysical and ethical implications of these classifications and divisions and of the Gītāic view of the soul-life. The verses we have quoted above are sufficient to convince an impartial enquirer of the highly intellectual training, spiritual fervour and ethical temperament of the Poet, and of the lofty moral ideals and speculative concepts that prevailed in the cultured society of his age

---

## *SECTION XIII*

### **CONCLUSIONS AS TO THE MORAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS OF THE POET**

100 Summing up the results of our discussion in this chapter, we may lay down with some amount of certainty the following propositions as regards the social condition and the moral tone of the people during the age of the *Gītā* and as regards the moral experiences and the ethical ideal of the Poet

(1) Side by side with the sages and seers, Yogis and Bhaktas, men of pious disposition and moral fervour, with a lofty spiritual idealism, there were in the social environment of our Poet wicked people of demoniacal spirit who were materialistic in their tendencies, self-seeking in their habits and impulses, and hedonistic in their ideal and conception of moral life. Among these latter were atheists and sceptics, the egoists, sensualists, and the utilitarians, who were generally condemned and deprecated in society

101 (2) The social organisation of the Hindus in those days had already evolved the four principal castes Brāhmans, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras—dividing people according to their nature and disposition although this classification tended to assume a more or less hereditary character. The first two of these castes had a higher status, while the Vaiśyas and Śūdras were uncultured, and as such, assigned a lower rank. The position of women was almost on the same level with that of the

Vaiśyas and Śūdras. Every individual was expected to fulfil the duties proper to his caste, which were clearly defined, and social and religious sanctions were attached to the violation of one's caste-duties. We have found reasons to believe that the poet had a liberal and rational attitude towards the social organisation based on caste and tried to give an ethical interpretation of the nature of these class distinctions in society, and of the character of the duties assigned to each, and that there were under-currents of thought and movements of social and religious reform already working in the atmosphere which favoured a loftier conception of duty and a truer and more spiritual view of the social organisation, of which the Poet of the Gītā was probably the first inaugurator and certainly the chief exponent.

102 (3) The complexity of the social relations based on the joint family system and the highly developed sense of tribal unity not only gave rise to customs and traditions which had to be scrupulously observed by the leaders in the interest of the ignorant masses and for the conservation and betterment of the social organisation, but also prepared the way for the refinement of feeling, delicacy of sentiments and tenderness of emotions, which have since characterised the Hindus. We have seen how ancestor-worship and superstitious regard for and submission to one's elders and preceptors, and hatred of all that leads to the corruption of the family and the confusion of the castes, and also to the consequent degeneration of the race were the deep-rooted springs of actions, and how religion was the centre of moral life and the

foundation of the institution of family and of the social structure in those days. The author of the *Gītā* was conservative enough to raise his voice against those who favoured the renunciation of the customs and rites and the violations of ancient traditions, but at the same time he was wise and devout enough to seek for the rational basis of these customs and traditions and to enjoin that their observances must be accompanied by the high ideal of devotion to God and freedom from passion or attachment to action and desire for rewards. I have also maintained that the *Gītā* was prior in origin to the *Manusamhitā*, as the latter elaborates the Hindu institution of four *Āśramas*, while the former does not mention it even once but rather shows the same attitude towards the various stages of life as the older *Upaniṣads*.

103 (4) The moral ideas of the poet and the moral ethos of his society were, as we have seen, very intimately connected with a deeply spiritual religion on the one hand and with highly intellectual speculations on the Psychology and the Metaphysics of moral life on the other. Thus we have inferred from the systematic account of the genesis of immoral impulses, of the processes of restraining senses and attaining self-control, from the acute analysis of the various mental elements that enter into the constitution of the inner republic, from the array of divisions, classifications, and definitions, of concepts in accordance with a precise method of moral valuation and from the various descriptions of the types of wise men or devotees or Yogi as well as, the long list of virtues or moral qualities found in the *Gītā* that

the Poet not only lived in an environment, deeply saturated with religious fervour and moral earnestness, and highly surcharged with intellectual speculations, but also was himself a moral and intellectual genius of the highest order, gifted with a spiritual intuition of moral values and a rational insight into the significance of current moral ideas and practices which enabled him to reconcile and bring into a harmony apparently conflicting modes of discipline and divergent ideals of culture, and that he had the ethical insight and genius of an Aristotle and Kant, and the philosophical talent and intellectual grasp of a Yājñavalkya or a Socrates, combined with the religious zeal of a Buddha or Jesus and the mystic ecstasy of a Plotinus or Eckhert.

104 (5) Lastly, I have compared the age of the Gītā in relation to the Indian systems of Philosophy with the age of Socratic Ethics in relation to the systems of Plato and Aristotle in the history of Greek Philosophy, and concluded therefrom that the Gītā gives us indeed a highly systematic form of Ethics and religion, but as regards metaphysics or philosophy proper, it contains mainly poetic intuition of truths, which served as germs for the evolution of later systematic schools of Indian Philosophy.

---

## CHAPTER III.

### THE POET OF THE GITA AND THE INTELLECTUAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE AGE.

(THE POET'S LITERARY TRAINING & PHILOSOPHICAL  
EQUIPMENT.)

#### SECTION I.

##### THE DATA OR THE MATERIALS BEFORE US—

105 In the last two chapters we attempted at a reconstruction of the picture of the moral, social and religious environments of the poet through an analysis of the various modes of culture and discipline, and an examination of the various ideas and concepts described and referred to in the poem. We shall now try to represent the intellectual atmosphere of the age and form an idea of the philosophical talent and literary training of the poet by the same method. We are however in a better position to conceive of the speculative than of the moral and social environments of our author, in as much as references on the subject in the poem are too numerous and at the same time too self-evident to need any indirect inference or guesswork.

106 The Literary Training and Philosophical Equipment of the Poet can be gathered not only from the large number of philosophical concepts relating to

knowledge and the ideas of Nature, Soul, and God etc ; but also from the various references that we find in the Gītā to such terms as the Vedas, the Vedānta, the Brahmasūtras, Sāṅkhya and Yoga and to such great authorities on ancient philosophical and religious works of India as Kapila, Vyāsa, Nārada ; as well as to quasi-historical personages and mythical gods, which abound in the narration of Divine Manifestations in the tenth chapter of our poem. For example, our Poet not only expressly mentions the names of great Rsis like Nārada, Asita, Devala, Vyāsa and Kapila, and Bhrgu , and of the classes of Nature-gods like Devas, Āditya, Vasus and Maruts and Rudras with Indra (Vāsava), Visnu, Agnī (Pāvaka), Marichi and Śankara as their heads, but also alludes to seven Mahāṛsis, four earlier ones, Manus, as well as to Kuvera (Vittesha), the chief of Yakṣa Raksas, Brhaspati, the chief of Priests, Skanda, the chief of Generals (of the heavenly army), Chitraratha, the chief of Gandarvas, Kandarpa, the presiding deity of the progenitors, Vāsuki, the chief of the snakes (sarpas), Ananta, the chief of the Nāgas, Varuna, of the Yadas (sea-dwellers), Arjyamā of the Pītris, Prahlāda among the Daityas, Yama among the controllers, Rāma among the weapon-weilders, Usāna of the poets. Besides we have such significant names as the mountains of Himālaya and Meru, the horse called Ucchaihśrava, which is said to have its origin in Amrita (nectar), the elephant called Airāvata, the weapon called Thunderbolt and the bird called Vainateya, the cow called Kāmadhuk (Fulfiller of all desires), Fish called Makara, the river known as

Jāhnavī, Mārgaśīrsa as the chief of the month, Gāyatrī, as chief of the Chhandas, Brhāt Sáma of the Sáma, a kind of *yajña* known as *japayajña*. Add to all this the names of the Vedic gods *Aśvin* (the twins) and Visve, and one will be able to imagine the vastness of the range of literature in those days, from which the poet of the Bhagavadgītā\* had drawn his materials.

107 The intellectual height of the poet's surrounding will be apparent to any one who considers the implications of such places where God is said to be the Mind among the senses, as consciousness (Chetanā) among the living beings, as One syllable (Aksara i e OM) among the Words, as Time among those that calculate or measure, as the Science of the Self (or Philosophy) among the sciences, (Vidyās), as debate among the debators, as the first letter (a) among the alphabets, and lastly such verses as the G VII 29–30 and G VIII 1–2 where we find a number of technical philosophical concepts which seem to have been of dominating interest to all thoughtful minds in those days, e g they who take refuge in God and strive with a view to attain liberation from birth and death are said to know Brahna, the whole of *Adhyātma* (science concerning the self) all actions, *Adhibhutam* (all relating to the Elements), *Adhidharma* (all relating to the gods), *Adhiyajñam* (all pertaining to Sacrifices) and also know God at the time of departing from the world In the eighth chapter, Arjuna asks of his

---

\* I mean the Gītā in its present form including epic redactor's interpolations, if any.

spiritual Guide, friend and philosopher as to the meanings of these expressions and is told that Brahma is the Supreme Imperishable (Eternal), *Adhyátma* is His essential Nature, Action consists in the Sacrifice (or emanating) that causes the birth of beings *Adhibhûta* is the perishable nature and *Adhidaivatam* is the individual Self, the living energy. Adhvajña is God himself as dwelling in the embodied beings Then follows a detailed description of how a man who casts off the body thinking upon God only at the time of the end enters into the essential nature of God

108 It is in these philosophical mythical and literary allusions and references, if anywhere, that a student of History will look for materials that may enlighten him not only as to the age of the *Gītā*, but also as to the intellectual environment and literary culture of the Poet. One cannot help remarking that in many of these passages the resemblance of the *Gītā* to the *Purānas* and to the later didactic pieces of the Epic *Mahābhārata* is more than evident.—so much so that one is led to suspect “the touch of a modernising hand” and a refashioning of the style and contents in our poem as Hopkins and Garbe have done It will be therefore necessary to subject these references and allusions to a detailed examination with a view to discover, if there are any traces of interpolation in the text or any evidences of the later origin of the *Gītā* bringing it down to the Epic and the *Purānic* Age and also to find out if there are sufficient reasons in favour of the view we have been maintaining throughout, that the poem belongs to the Upanisadic

strata of the development of Indian literature and existed in fact as an Upanisad in its original form until it was incorporated in the Mahābhārata Epic with necessary modifications by interested parties. When these questions are satisfactorily settled, we shall not find it difficult to assign the rightful position of the Gītā in the ancient literature of India and to understand the ethical, philosophical and religious teachings of our poet in the proper perspective both of their true historical relations and of their logical bearing.

109 The intellectual outlook of the Poet as reflected in the theoretical concepts and philosophical topics found scattered in the poem, which may be conveniently classified into following groups — (1) Conception of knowledge, (2) Psychology and Metaphysics of the soul-life, (3) Philosophy of Nature, (4) Idea of God, (5) Notions about the Future life and the Summum Bonum.

It is to be remembered that we are concerned here with the proofs of the speculative atmosphere of the times with a view to finding out, if possible, the philosophical pre-suppositions of the thought-system of our poet. It will therefore serve our purpose sufficiently well, if we simply follow the exact words and phraseology of the poem itself, and put them in a systematic form, without introducing any exposition and interpretation or passing any judgment of our own, except where an inference from the various passages quoted seems to be called for. We shall reserve for a later occasion the critical study of the origin of the various conceptions and the

comparative estimate of their values in the history of world-philosophy in general, and of Indian thought in particular.

---

## SECTION II

### CONCEPTION OF KNOWLEDGE.

#### (a) *Supremacy of Wisdom.*

110. We have already seen that knowledge, reason, wisdom and intellectual activity occupied a very prominent position in the system of spiritual culture in the days of the *Gītā* and that wisdom was regarded as the best of all sacrifices and as the quickest path that leads man to peace. Thus we are told, 'Better than the sacrifice of any objects is the sacrifice of wisdom : all actions in their entirety culminate in wisdom' (*G. IV* §3). That there were various modes of discipline enjoined for the acquisition of wisdom and that various classes of teachers existed for imparting instructions to disciples is clearly hinted in the verse that follows next, viz. "Learn thou this by discipleship by investigation, and by service. The wise, the seers of the essence of things, will instruct thee in wisdom" (*G. IV* §4). Wisdom is held to be the best purifier in the world and it can be attained by a man who is full of faith and who

has mastery over his senses (G IV 38-39) When this wisdom is enveloped by unwisdom, mortals are deluded, but in those whose unwisdom is destroyed by the wisdom of the self, wisdom shines as the sun reveals the Supreme (G V 15-16) The ideal sage or Yogi of the *Gītā* is said to be satisfied with wisdom and knowledge (V. 18) and to find supreme delight which reason can grasp but which is beyond the senses (G VI 21) The highest state of knowledge attainable by a Yogi consists in "seeing the self abiding in all beings and all beings in the self, and seeing the same everywhere," or in other words, "seeing God in every object and seeing everything in God" (G VI 29-30) It is therefore natural that after the discussion on the moral ideal of duty and practice of *yaga* in the first six chapters, the poet of the *Gītā* passes on to the metaphysical portion of his treatise dealing with the philosophical conception of God and His relation to the self and the world The seventh chapter tells us how God can be known absolutely without doubt and in His fullness by one whose mind clings to Him, who is united in Yoga with him, and who takes refuge in Him, and this knowledge is said to be the very perfection of wisdom, which having been acquired leaves nothing else to be known . hardly one among thousands of men, we are told, strives for this perfection, and of the successful strivers hardly one knows God in essence (G VIII 3)

111 Primacy of knowledge is also shown by the inclusion of seekers after knowledge as well as the wise among the four classes of devotees of God, and the re-

conception of the wise worshipping the One God, as the best of devotees and even as the very self of God, for we are told, a wise man who realises that God is all in all is rare, and such a wisdom and realisation of God can be attained only as a result of spiritual endeavour for many births (G. VIII 16) The omniscience attained by a yogi is given a more or less exaggerated form of expression in the verses G. VII 29-30 and G. VIII 27-29, wherein it is asserted that a yogi knows Brahman all about the self, the whole field of action, and knows God as presiding over the elements, over the gods and over the sacrifices besides he is said to know God even in the hour of his departure and to transcend the fruits of meritorious deeds attached to the study of the Vedas, to sacrifices, to austerities, and to charities by virtue of his knowing the paths along which the soul is reborn in this world or is liberated Knowledge of God in His essential nature and of His constant activity in the world and loving relation to man is called the "profoundest secret," combining science and philosophy (*jñānam* with *vijñānam*), "the sovereign science," the "royal secret," the supreme purifier, intuitional, in conformity with the moral law, very delightful to achieve, imperishable, and incapable of being attained by man without faith (G. IX 1-3) Again this "supreme secret concerning the self" (G. XI 1) or this sovereign *yoga* is said to be revealed to men only by the special grace of God, and to be inaccessible to the senses (G. XI 8) The representation of the universe as the body of God and seeing the manifestation of God in each and every object

in the world of nature and spirit formed the highest culmination of wisdom, and this "Divine form" was revealed by the "Lord of Yoga" only to the most devoted *yogi* whose number was very few (G XI 3, 9, 47-49, 51-54) Thus we find that during the age of the *Gītā* the highest goal of knowledge was one with the highest goal of religion, and that God-consciousness was the culmination of wisdom, and it was for this reason that intellectual culture and attainment of wisdom formed the essential element and the primary object in the educational system and the spiritual discipline of the society in which our Poet was born

(b) *Analysis of the Elements of Knowledge*

112 One of the surest criteria by which the intellectual progress of a people can be judged is the extent of inwardness of thought or of the activities of the mind directed towards its own inner processes, as manifested for instance in the analysis of the act of knowledge into its constituent factors. In chapter XIII of the *Gītā* we find a highly philosophical conception of knowledge and a minute description of the field of knowledge with its modifications and an accurate representation of the knower and the knowable, which give us an unmistakably clear idea about the acuteness of the intellect of our poet, the subtlety of his power of analysis and fineness of his introspective observation. A brief survey of the contents of this chapter cannot fail to convince one equally well of the highly intellectual environment in which the poet must have been born and brought up, and from which he must have imbibed the spirit of

metaphysical enquiry as well as the method of analysis and classification that characterise the treatment of the subjects dealt with in this part of the poem. For the deeper the region of the inner life penetrated by the mind's eye and sharper the division and definition of the element of knowledge found in a work, the clearer and more indubitable the proof supplied to us that the author and his environment were highly advanced in the stage of speculative thought. Let us quote the following, for example —

113. (1) A discrimination is made between wisdom and ignorance, of which the former is said to be made up of the best of virtues that constituted the highest moral ideal of the age (G XIII 8-12). The Socratic Principle of virtue as knowledge seems to have been anticipated by our poet in its more philosophical form, viz "knowledge involves the sumtotal of virtues. Beside humility, unassumingness, harmlessness, forgiveness, rectitude, purity, steadfastness, and self-control which are purely moral virtues and form preliminary disciplines for every seeker after knowledge as well as the essential marks of wisdom, real wisdom is said to include such qualities as service of the teacher, dispassion towards objects of senses, absence of egoism, insight into the evils of birth, death, old age, disease and other sufferings, unattachment and want of self-identification with son, wife or home, resort to sequestered places, absence of enjoyment in the company of men and constant balance of mind in wished-for and unwished-for events. But to complete the list, there are added to these, constancy in the knowledge con-

cerning the self, understanding of the meaning of metaphysical truths on the intellectual side and unflinching and undivided devotion to God by Yoga on the devotional side as the necessary elements of the highest knowledge

114 (ii) Then again, wisdom consists in knowing the field and the knower of the field, which represent respectively the body including the mind and the knowing subject (G XIII 2-3) What that field is and of what nature, how modified and whence it is, and what the knower of the field is and what its powers are—these truths are said to be sung by the Rsis in manifold ways, in many verses of the Vedas and in concise but decisive and reasoned proposition concerning Brahma (G XIII 4, 5) The field and its modifications are constituted by the great elements (i e earth, water, fire, air, and ether), the ten senses and the one (i e five organs of senses, five organs of actions, and the mind), five objects of senses (i e colour, sound, smell, taste and touch), self-hood, reason and the unmanifested, as well as by desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, combination of these (i e the body), intelligence and firmness (G XIII 6-7) The knower of the field is no doubt the subject or the knowing self, which knows the body, the mind and their modifications described above , but it is significant that the poet understands by the knower of the field, not the individual subject, but the Universal Ego, or God who resides in all bodies as the principle of intelligence or the Eternal Reason in human beings (G XIII 2-3).

115. (iii) Again the discrimination between Purusa

and Prakrti, spirit and matter has been regarded as the mark of real insight from the earliest period of speculations in India. Hence the verses, "He who seeth that matter verily performeth all actions and that the self is actionless he seeth (G XIII 30) He who thus knoweth spirit and matter with its qualities in whatsoever condition he may be, he shall not be born again (24) They who by the eyes of wisdom perceive the difference between the field and the knower of the field, and the liberation of beings from matter they go to the Supreme (G XIII 35)"

116 (iv) But what is most striking in this chapter is the Poet's grasp of the essential characteristic of Philosophical knowledge as a search for unity in the midst of multiplicity and as an attempt to deduce the many from the one,—which reminds us of the dialectic method of Plato, the great Philosopher of Greece. Thus we are told in the Gītā (XIII 31), "when one perceiveth the diversified existence of beings as rooted in the One and spreading forth from it, then he reaches Brahman." This conception of knowledge is further confirmed by the three-fold classification which meets us in the Gītā (XVIII 20-22), viz., "That by which one indestructible Being is seen in all beings, undivided in the distributed that knowledge is pure (*Sāttvika*) But that knowledge which regardeth the several manifold existences in all beings as separate—is of the quality of passion (*rajas*), while that which clingeth narrow-mindedly to each one thing as if it were the whole, without reason, without grasping the reality that knowledge is dark (*tamas*)" It

may be observed that this classification and characterisation of knowledge has a very close and marked resemblance with the epistemology of Spinoza

(c) *The End of knowledge*

117 (i) The highest object of knowledge is nothing short of the beginningless, supreme Brahma, which is neither being nor non-being, whose hands and feet are everywhere, whose eyes and ears, heads and mouths are everywhere, who dwelleth in the world, developing all, who shines with all sense-faculties without any sense, supports everything and yet remains unattached, and who enjoys all qualities and is yet free from qualities, who is without and within all beings, immovable and also movable, at hand and yet far away, and who is imperceptible by reason of his subtlety, who is not divided among beings and yet seated distributively, and is the generator and the sustainer and the destroyer of all beings, the light of all lights, beyond darkness, who is seated in the hearts of all, and who is the wisdom, the object of wisdom and attainable by wisdom—all in one (G XIII 13—18)

118 (ii) When we turn to the chapter XIV, we find that the supreme wisdom or the best of all knowledge, which leads the sages to perfection, is proclaimed as consisting in this truth viz “God places the germ, as it were in the womb of Mahat Brahma (i.e. Nature), whence cometh the generation of all beings. In whatsoever wombs mortals are produced, Nature is their mother (womb) and God, their life-giving father (G XIV 1-4).” From this follows another element of the saving know-

ledge viz that the three qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are born of Nature and bind all mortals but not God, who is beyond the qualities When the seer perceiveth no agent other than the qualities and knoweth that which is higher than qualities (i.e. God), he entereth into Divine nature and becomes immortal (G. XIV. 5-19)

(iii) Knowledge of three kinds of Purusas (Spirit) in the world, viz, the destructible, the indestructible and the highest Supreme Spirit is called the most secret teaching, knowing which one becomes illuminated and one's work is finished He who undeluded knoweth God as the Supreme Spirit, he becomes all-knowing and worships Him with his whole being (G XV. 16-20)

119 (iv) Lastly, the highest state of wisdom which is said to be attained by the perfected soul after going through a regular system of moral discipline and spiritual culture, consists in becoming one with Brahman, which implies that the sage, contented with the self, neither grieveth, nor desireth, and being the same to all beings, obtaineth supreme devotion to God , by devotion he knoweth God in His essential nature, who and what He is having thus known Him in essence, he sooth-with entereth into His Being (G XVIII 50, 54-55)

120 This survey of the classification and analysis of knowledge and conception of the nature and contents of the highest wisdom, according to the Gītā, unmistakably points to the height of philosophical speculations and the depth of spiritual experiences that the poet found in

his environments, and also shows that the author of the *Gītā* combined in his own disposition the sincerity of an earnest enquirer and the soundness of a wise preceptor. No wonder therefore that a product of such an intellectual genius in such a speculative atmosphere should exhibit points of resemblance in its philosophical conceptions with the works of the greatest minds of Europe like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus, Bruno, and Eckhart, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel.

---

### SECTION III

#### METAPHYSICS OF THE SOUL

##### (a) *Nature of the Soul and Its Relation to the Body* *Its pre-Existence and Survival*

121 Nothing is more characteristic of the Hindu Psychology than the sharp and rigid contrast which it has always drawn between the body and the soul and the way in which it distinguishes the mind as a mere internal sense or organ of the soul from the soul itself. If the Rsis of India can be credited with any new discovery in the field of human thought, it is the discovery of the soul, which they clearly conceived to be the principle of life, movement and intelligence in man, which is not

itself subject to birth and death, to change and motion. The Poet of the Gītā has not only been true to the ancient tradition of the Rsis of the Upanisads in this respect, but upholds the conception of the soul in a manner and in a language that will ever remain without a parallel in the history of sacred literature. The immortality of the soul and its distinction from the body form the burden of the discourse of Kīsna in the beginning of the Poem, and we cannot do better than quote those beautiful verses in the second chapter in order to give our readers an idea of the psychological concepts of our Poet —

“Nor at any time verily was I not, nor thou, nor these princes of man, nor verily shall we ever cease to be, hereafter. As the dweller in the body experienceth in the body childhood, youth, old age, so passeth he on to another body, the wise do not grieve thereat. The contacts of matter are the causes of cold and heat, pleasure and pain, they come and go and are impermanent, you should endure them bravely, the wise one who is balanced in pain and pleasure, and whom these torment not, is fitted for immortality. The unreal hath no being, the real never ceases to be, the truth about both had been perceived by the seer of the Essence of things, know that to be indestructible of that imperishable one. The dweller in the body, who is eternal, indestructible and immeasurable is said to assume these bodies which are perishable. He who regardeth this as a slayer and he who thinketh he is slain, both of them are ignorant. He slayth not, nor is he slain. He is not born, nor does

he die, nor having come to be, ceaseth he anymore to be ; unborn, perpetual, eternal and ancient, he is not slain when the body is slaughtered Who knoweth him indestructible, perpetual, unborn, undiminishing, how can that man slay or cease to be slain ? As a man, casting off worn-out garments, taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off worn out bodies, entereth into others that are new Weapons cleave him not, nor fire burneth him, nor waters wet him, nor wind drieth him away , uncleavable he, incombustible he, and indeed neither to be wetted nor dried away, perpetual, all-pervasive, stable, immovable, ancient, unmanifest, unthinkable, immutable he is called , knowing him as such, one should not grieve If one thinks of him as being constantly born and constantly dying, even then one should not grieve, for certain is death for the born and certain is birth for the dead, therefore over the inevitable one should not grieve Beings are unmanifest in their origin, manifest in their midmost state, unmanifest likewise are they in dissolution What room then for lamentation ? As marvellous one regardeth him, as marvellous another speaketh thereof, as marvellous another heareth thereof, yet having heard none indeed understandeth. This dwelleth in the body of every one is ever invulnerable, therefore one should not grieve for any creature (G II 12-30)"

122 It will be seen that the soul is not only said to survive the destruction of the body but also to have previously existed before the birth of a man , in other words, being immortal, the soul is independent in its essence,

of all connection with the body, so that birth and death, youth and old age and changes in the body do not apply to it at all. And yet beside the conception of the immortality of the soul, the theory of rebirths and transmigrations forms an essential part of the metaphysics of the soul according to the *Gītā*. Thus the immortal spirit is said to draw round itself the five external senses and mind (the sixth or internal sense), all of which have their root in matter. When this lord of the body assumes a corporate form or when he abandons it, he seizeth these (the senses and the mind) and goeth with them as the wind takes fragrances from their retreats. Presiding over the ear, the eye, the touch, the taste and the smell and in the mind also, he enjoyeth the objects of senses. The deluded do not perceive him when he departeth or stayeth or enjoyeth, swayed by the qualities, but the sages perceive him with the eye of wisdom. Yogis also, striving, perceive him established in the self, but the unintelligent whose minds are untrained perceive him not, though striving (G XV 7-11).

It is important to note that this conception of the soul as assuming any number of bodies one after another, is common heritage of the Indian mind from the Vedic and the Upanisadic sages and that the authority of the *Gītā* has lent additional weight and support to this theory in the speculations of subsequent ages like the Vedanta and other philosophical systems.

#### (a) SOUL AND MATTER

123. With the distinction of the soul from the body

there appears in the *Gītā* as a necessary part of the same system of thought, the conception of the self as independent of all natural qualities and mental activities. Matter or Nature is the cause of all actions and the spirit is always indifferent and inactive, truly speaking. This view is expressed in the following forms—

(i) All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The self deluded by egoism thinketh, "I am the doer." But he who knoweth the essence of the divisions of qualities and functions holding that "qualities move amid qualities" is not attached.

Those deluded by the qualities of nature are attached to the functions of the qualities. The man of perfect knowledge should not unsettle the foolish whose knowledge is imperfect (*G* III 37-20).

(ii) Know thou that Matter and spirit are both without beginning and also that the modifications and qualities are all born of Matter. Matter is called the cause of the generations of causes and effects, spirit is called the cause of the enjoyment of pleasure and pain. spirit seated in matter useth the qualities born of matter, attachment to the qualities is the cause of his births in good and evil works. He who seeth that Matter verily performeth all actions and that the Self is actionless he seeth (*G* XIII 20-22, 30).

(iii) For the accomplishment of all actions, five causes are declared in the speculative philosophy (*Sāṅkhya*), viz., the body, the actor, the various organs, the diverse kinds of efforts, and the supernatural agency, whatever action a man performeth by his body, speech

and mind, whether right or the reverse, these five are the causes thereof That being so, he verily who, owing to untrained reason, looks on his self which is isolated as the actor, he of perverted intelligence, seeth not He who is free from the egoistic notion, whose reason is not affected, though he slay these peoples, he slayeth not, nor is he bound (G XVIII 13-17)

124 The history of Indian philosophy is fully saturated with this conception of the distinction between the Purusa on the one hand and Prakrti and her *guṇas*, or qualities on the other When we take up the systematic study of the philosophy of the Gītā, we shall try to interpret this doctrine in a manner that will clearly reveal the similarity of thought between the Gītā and the Critical Philosophy of Kant in this respect It is sufficient to observe here that a whole system of metaphysics underlies the mode of thinking represented in these verses, which should unquestionably convince one of the fact that the Poet of the Gītā lived in an environment that afforded immense room for intellectual exercises of a high order and that he was thoroughly acquainted with all the technical concepts, and philosophical theories prevailing in the scholastic circles of his age

---

## SECTION IV

### GOD AND THE SOUL

#### *Relation between the Individual and the Universal Self*

125 The identity of Brahman and Ātman, the Infinite and the Finite Self, or of God and the soul has been recognised as the dominating principle in the philosophy of the Hindus from the earliest age of speculations. The Poet of the Bhagavad Gītā was not uninfluenced by this conception and we find a number of verses in the poem where no distinction is drawn between the individual and the Universal self, and as a matter of fact, the same terms which are generally connotative of the attributes of God are employed to signify the human soul. But at the same time the relation between the Infinite and the Finite self is in many places conceived of as that between the Creator and the Created, the Lord and the dependent, the whole and the part. This double-sided conception indicates the Upanisadic origin of the ideas of the Gītā and the close relations of the latter to the Vedānta School of thought.

126 To take first of all the passages where the same term is used to mean both the Supreme Self and the finite self, we read in the Gītā (VI 5-7), "Let him raise the Ātman (the self) by the Ātman (the Self) and not let the self become depressed, for verily is the self the friend of the self of him in whom the self by the Self is van-

quished but to the unworthy self the self verily becometh hostile as an enemy The higher self (Paramātman) of him who is self controlled and peaceful is uniform in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, as well as in honour and dishonour" Here in the first two verses the term Ātman is used to signify both the Higher and the lower self (or God and the Soul), while in the third verse the term Paramātman which generally refers to God is used to convey the meaning of the individual soul

127 Again, in the thirteenth chapter of the Gītā we meet with verses which seem to identify the individual with the Universal self or at least to employ terms which generally stand for God in the sense of the individual subject or Spirit Thus we are told "Supervisor and permitter, supporter and enjoyer, the Great Lord (Maheśvara) and also the Supreme self (Paramātman),—thus is styled the great spirit (Purusa) in this body He who thus knoweth Spirit and Matter with its qualities shall not be born again Some by meditation behold the Self in the self by the self (Ātmani Ātmānam Ātmanā), others by the Sāṅkhya Yoga, and others by the Yoga of action seated equally in all beings, the supreme Lord (Parameśwara), unperishing within the perishing—he who thus seeth, seeth, seeing indeed everywhere the same Lord (Iśvara) equally dwelling, he doth not destroy the self by the self and thus meadeth the highest path Being beginningless and without qualities, the unperishable Supreme Self (Paramātma) though seated in the body, worketh not, nor is he affected As the Omni-

present either is not affected by reason of its subtlety, or seated everywhere in the body, the self is not affected. As the sun illumineth the whole earth, so the Lord of the field illumineth the whole field (the body) (G. XIII. 23-25, 28-29, 32-34).

128. In these passages terms and epithets (like Maheśvara, Paramātmā, Parameśvara, Iśvara), which usually carry with them the attributes connotative of the Divine Self, are predicated of the spirit dwelling in the body of every individual in a way as if both of them were one and the same. And the same idea is expressed in the verse G. XVI. 18, where the malicious ones of demoniacal disposition are said to hate God in the bodies of others and in their own and also in the verse G. XVII. 6, which tells us that the unintelligent people of demoniacal resolve tormenting the organisation of elements in the body torment God as well, who is seated in the inner body.

129. Side by side with this identification of the soul with God and the immanence of God in the soul there are verses in the Gītā which give us a quite different conception of God and the Soul, and indicate a relation, of well-defined distinction between them. For example, "know my other nature, the higher, in the form of the individual self by which the universe is upheld" (G. VII. 6) and again "a portion of my own self (i.e. of the Divine Self) transformed in the world of life into an immortal spirit draweth round itself the senses, of which the mind is the sixth, veiled in matter (G. XV. 7). Here in these two passages the individual is said to be the

higher nature and a portion of the Universal Self. When God is said to be the life in all beings (G. VII. 9), the eternal seed of all beings, the reason of the rational, (G. VII. 10), the strength of the strong, devoid of desire and passion, and the desire in beings which is not contrary to duty (G. VII. 11), when mind, intellect and self-consciousness (Egoism) along with the five material elements are said to be the eightfold division of the lower nature of God (G. VII. 4), when God is said to dwell in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings to revolve at though mounted on a potter's wheel by His illusive Power, (G. XVIII. 61) and when we find our Poet upholding throughout the poem the transcendent nature of God and the subordinate position of the soul, teaching the purest doctrines of a devotional religion based on the attitude of reverential adoration towards God on the part of man, there can be no question about the recognition of a dualistic conception of the relation between the Universal and the Individual self during the age of the *Gītā*. It will be admitted that the conceptions of Pantheism and Theism, of Monism and Dualism, as well as the notions of immanence and transcendence were equally predominant in the intellectual atmosphere of India at the time of the Rsis of the Upanisads. and that the Author of the *Gītā* simply breathes the spirit of the Upanisadic age with regard to his conception of the soul and its relation to God.

---

## SECTION V.

### GRADATION OF ELEMENTS IN MENTAL LIFE. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND METAPHYSICAL STUDY OF THE MIND.

130 The representation of mental life in the *Gītā* as a hierarchy of psychical powers or principles in which the higher elements dominate the lower ones and these are subordinated to the higher and the self reigns supreme, reminds us of the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of the soul-life as an inner republic with reason as its sovereign. And the psychology of vicious acts or wrong-doings as presented in the *Gītā* also has a remarkable resemblance with that of Plato and Aristotle. The mind and the senses are conceived as working harmoniously in the life of a Yogi, in so far as the former controls the latter, and the latter lend themselves to the guidance of the former, but in a man of evil disposition the latter take the upper hand and lead the former. "The excited senses even of a wise man, though he be striving, impetuously carry away his mind. Having restrained them all, he should sit harmonised, God as his supreme goal, for whose senses are mastered, of him the understanding is well-poised" (*G* II 60-61) He who controlleth the senses by the mind and performeth with the organs of action the Yoga of action without attachment, is worthy (*G* III 7) "Affection and aversion for the objects of senses, let none come under the dominion of these two they are obstructors of the path. (*G.* III. 34).

131. In the verses (G. II. 36-43), desire and anger, begotten of the quality of passion (*rajas*) are said to be the enemies of man on earth, which drag men by force and lead him to commit sin against his will as it were ; the senses, the mind and the reason are said to be the seat of desire, which by enveloping wisdom with these, bewilders the dweller in the body , one should, therefore, master the senses, first of all and slay this thing of sin, destructive of wisdom and knowledge Then follows a gradation of higher and lower order among the mental elements, which has its root in the Upanisads (cf Katha Upanisad) and its fuller development in the traditional systems of Philosophy in India, especially in the Sāmkhya school “It is said that the senses are great : greater than the senses is the mind, greater than the mind is the Reason, but what is greater than the Reason is He (i e. the Self). Thus understanding Him (the Self) as greater than Reason, restraining the self by the Self, one should slay the enemy in the form of desire difficult to overcome (G II 42-43)

132 It is note-worthy that the Psychology of the Hindus not only includes mind among the senses and places it as the inner sense, higher than the external senses, but also assigns it a subordinate position in relation to intellect or reason This (reason or intellect) is again regarded to be lower than the self which is the highest principle in the inner republic. It may also be noticed that the expressions like “restraining the self by the self” or “seeing the self in the self by the self” are frequently met with in the poem and seem to imply that

a division was made in those days between the lower self and the higher self, the former being conceived to consist of the senses, the mind and even the intellect, which are said to be the seat of desire, and the latter being regarded as the pure rational self conceived like the noumenal Ego (as distinguished from the empirical Ego) of Kant and identified in the same manner with the Divine Self.

133 This is also confirmed by the verses (G VII 8-9 and G XV, 7-10) where the individual self is regarded as the internal part of or the higher nature of God, and mind, reason, and egoism, as well as the senses and sense-objects are said to belong to His inferior nature and assigned a subordinate place. We may note that this conception of a gradually ascending order in mental life of the senses, the mind, the intellect and the principle of Individuality (egoism), and the Self, set forth in these verses as well as in the G III. 42-43, bears close resemblance to the Logos doctrines of the Neo-Platonic thinkers of the West and is also intimately connected with the principles of the Sāmkhya Philosophy.

134 It is very remarkable that besides the passages just referred to, there is an enumeration of all the principal elements of the Sāmkhya system along with other principles in the Gītā XIII. 6-7, where the constituents and the modifications of the body or the field (i.e. the objective aspect of knowledge) are described. Thus the 24 principles of the Sāmkhya (all except the one, Purusa) viz., the five great elements, five pastures of senses (sense-objects or qualities), ten senses, mind, indi-

viduality (egoism), Intellect (the Mahat or Buddhi of Sāmkhya) and the Unmanifested (i.e. Prakrti) are associated with some other principles like desire, aversion, pleasure, pain combination, (body), intelligence and firmness in these verses. We shall take this point again in connection with the relation between the Gītā and the principles of the Sāmkhya system.

---

## *SECTION VI*

### *PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE OR COSMOLOGY.*

135. The cosmological data supplied by our poem are so meagre that we shall not be far from representing the actual condition of intellectual life in those days, if we maintain that the thinking minds of the society in which the author of the Gītā lived, were like Socrates, too much occupied with the problems of the inner life and with the truths of a moral and religious nature to have any interest in or to find any time for, speculations on the World-process as manifested in the phenomena of Nature. We cannot say whether and how far this apparent ignorance of, or indifference to, the details of

the world of Nature on the part of the ancient Indian thinkers was due to a studious avoidance of such investigations as have contributed to the growth of Natural and Experimental Sciences in the West, or to the firm conviction or implicit understanding that the knowledge of Mind was the supreme necessity of man, and that knowledge of Nature could either wait or was of little use for the attainment of the *summum bonum* of human life. But this much at least is certain that the Rsis of the Upanisadic age, including the author of the Gītā had developed no such contempt or hatred for the world and for the study of Nature as is presupposed in the doctrine of Māyā, which regards the world as an illusion and nature as a chain that binds man to the cycle of births and rebirths, and according to which therefore the study of Nature was as much to be deprecated as the world was to be renounced. In the Gītā, no doubt, we find reference to the doctrine of illusion and the use of the term Māyā, but these have a quite different significance from their ordinary philosophical acceptation and have rather a religious connotation than metaphysical, and besides there is as yet no fully thought-out theory or system of Philosophy like that of the Vedānta School associated with the doctrine of Māyā. On the contrary, the references about continuous creation and destruction of the world in different periods or cycles of existence and various other references to the cosmological problems in the Gītā confirm our general proposition that the poem was composed in an age when the philosophical systems were still in the making.

(a) *The World-Process—Its Origin, Evolution and Dissolution*

136. The Cosmology and Cosmogony of the Gītā appear to be summed up in the following few verses :—

The worlds come and go, not excepting the world of Brahma. The people who know the day of Brahma (the Creator) a thousand ages in duration and the night a thousand ages in ending, they know day and night. From the Unmanifested all the manifested stream forth at the coming of day. at the coming of night they dissolve even in that, called the Unmanifested. This multitude of beings going forth repeatedly, is dissolved at the coming of night and streams forth at the coming of day, helpless as it were. Verily there existeth higher than that Unmanifested another Unmanifested, eternal, which on the destruction of all beings is not destroyed. That Unmanifested is called the "Indestructible", it is named the highest Path. They who reach It return not. That is the supreme Abode of God" (G VIII. 16-21) Here we meet with the following philosophical conceptions, assumed or presupposed :—

(i) Everything in the world is subject to change and all the various worlds are subject to perpetual transformation and continuous cycles of periodical creation and destruction

(ii) Time is relative—What appears to us to be an age, or even thousands of ages—is but a moment or day in the life of the Absolute or Brahma

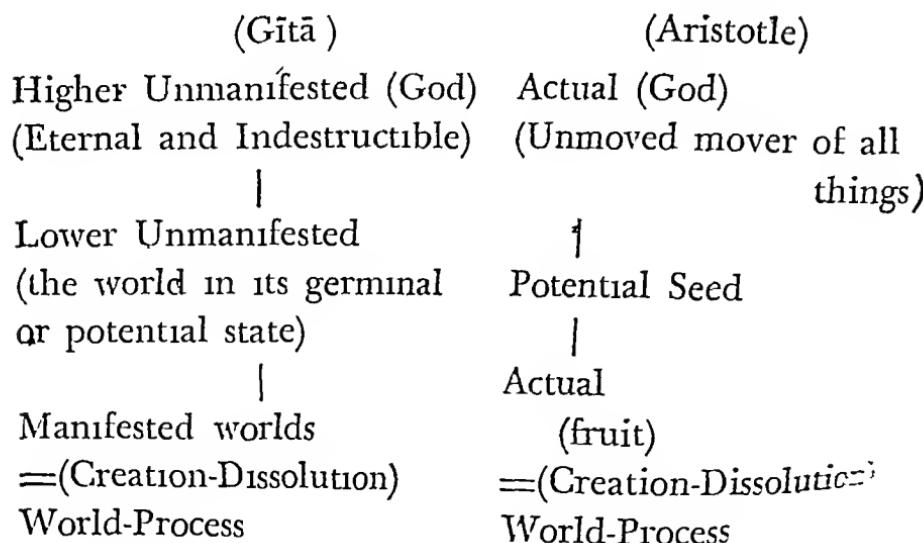
(iii) The process of creation is but the unfolding

or the manifestation of the plan which is hidden as invisible germ in the Unmanifested, and the process of dissolution is the return of the Manifested to the Unmanifested.

(iv) This continuous process of coming and going takes place according to a law of necessity, which is not under the control of Nature, but which is imposed on the world by a higher Being.

(v) This higher Being is called Unmanifested and Indestructible and is indeed God's own Being, which is eternal and abides beyond the manifested world of Creation and Destruction and beyond the Unmanifested source of these.

137. We may represent the world process of the *Gītā* after the manner of the Aristotelian conception of the Potential and the Actual, in the following form —



(b) The Conception of the World as ~~related to~~  
God.

138. The nature of the world in its relation to God is more explicitly stated in the following verses :—

All this world is pervaded by God in His unmanifested aspect ; all beings have root in Him ; He is not rooted in them. Nor have beings root in Him—such is His sovereign Yoga. The support of beings, yet He is not rooted in beings. The Divine self is their efficient cause. As the mighty air everywhere moving is rooted in the ether, so all beings rest rooted in God—All beings enter into His lower Nature at the end of a world-age ; at the beginning of the world-age again He emanates them. Resorting to His own Nature, God emanates again and again all this multitude of beings helpless owing to their dependence on Nature. These works do not bind God, enthroned on high and unattached to actions. Under Him as supervisor, Nature sends forth the moving and unmoving , because of this, the universe revolves. (G. IX. 4-10).

139. We may observe the following philosophical elements in these lines, which make clearer what was inadequately and imperfectly expressed in the last section (G. VIII. 16-21).

(i) The world is pervaded and supported by God. God is immanent in Nature and is constantly active in it as its supporter and sustainer.

(ii) And yet God is not rooted in beings, nor beings rooted in God—i.e. God is transcendent over and unattached to Nature. God is the supervisor of the cosmic process and the efficient cause of the world, not the material cause.

(iii) This dual conception of Immanence and Transcendence of God in the World, this union of two conflicting attributes in the Divine Nature was considered in those days—as is done also in modern times—as a mystery and known as a divine Yoga. As a concrete instance of something which is the root of things, pervades things and yet is not affected by things and does not add to the weight and material properties of things, the ancients pointed to the existence of Ether—with which the author of the *Gītā* compares God as related to the world.

(iv) Nature is only the vehicle or instrument of God with the help of which He creates all varieties of beings, which themselves are dependent on Nature and therefore not free. Nature runs her own course under the guidance of the supreme Spirit. The world-process with the coming and going of animate and inanimate beings is revolving almost automatically, thanks to the supervision of God.

140. We may remark in passing that these ideas of the *Gītā* contain in them, on the one hand, germs of the same problems which occupied the thoughts of the Cartesian school of Modern Philosophy and culminated in the Pantheism of Spinoza, and, on the other hand, the germs of the dualism between the empirical view of the necessity and mechanism of Nature and the rationalistic conception of a noumenal world governed by freedom and teleology, as interpreted by the religious man's faith in God, a dualism that has been brought into prominence by the Critical Philosophy of Kant. When one tries to

draw out the implications of these verses in the Gītā, one cannot fail to be struck by the similarity between the thoughts of the Gītā and those of the Sāṃkhya and the Vedānta System. It is to be noted that the view of the world as pervaded by God, as created by God, as the lower nature of God, is also expressed in many other chapters and verses of the Gītā, e.g. in G VII 4-6 Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether, along with Mind, Intellect and Egoism are said to be the eight-fold division of the Divine Nature in its lower aspect, the individual Self being the higher nature. All beings are said to proceed from this divine nature and God is said to be the source of the forthgoing of the whole Universe and likewise the place of its dissolving. In G XIII 27, we are told, whatsoever creature is born, immobile or mobile, it is from the union between the Field and the Knower of the Field or what is the same thing, between Nature and God. The same idea is made still more explicit and clearer in the G XIV 3-4, where Nature (Mahat Brahma) is said to be the womb of God, in which He places the germ whence cometh the birth of all beings. In whatsoever wombs mortals are produced, Nature is said to be their womb and God, their generating father.

141 Lastly, in G XV 1-4 the world is compared to an Aśvattha tree, with roots above and branches below. This tree is said to be indestructible and the hymns (of the Vedas) are said to form its leaves. Downwards and upwards spread the branches of it, the objects of the senses are its buds, which are nourished by the qualities (*gunas*), its roots growing downwards are formed by the

bonds of action in the world of men. Neither its form nor its end, nor its origin, nor its rooting place can be known here . this strongly rooted Aśvattha should be cut down by the unswerving weapon of non-attachment, in order that the path beyond may be sought, treading which there is no return Then one goes indeed to that Primal Spirit, whence the ancient vital impulse or energy streamed forth. The meaning of this simile is somewhat obscure, but in the light of the old Norwegian conception of the tree of Igdrasil and of the traditional Indian view of the life in the world as bondage, we may understand the purport of these beautiful verses The world of men is moved and guided by fundamental instincts and impulses as well as by social customs and traditions based on the Vedas, all of which have their source in the Divine Spirit which is the everlasting witness of all the events of history and the growth and evolution of society This tree of life has its roots upwards and branches downwards, because the ancient Eternal Being from which it emanates is the highest reality in relation to which the world-process may be said to be moving downwards The bondage of man is due to his actions originating from objects of senses which are nourished by the qualities or *gunas* Those who live and move in this world of sense-objects, of desires and inclinations are subject to the cycle of births and rebirths Liberation from this bondage can be attained only by practising the virtue of non-attachment or disinterested life and thereby uniting oneself with the Divine Spirit, which is the root-spring of all our activities and impulses, and it

is by reference to the universal will of God that each and every detail of our daily life and social conduct ought to be regulated. A thoughtful observer will not fail to see in this conception of the world a healthy, moral commonsense view quite different and far removed from the doctrine of Māyā or Illusion, which has been generally associated, though wrongly, with the Vedānta Philosophy but which is rather an aberration and degeneration of the Vedāntic thought as represented in the Upaniṣad and the Gītā.

142. It is to be noted that there are verses in the Gītā where the immanence of God in the world is set forth side by side with those where the transcendence of God above the world is as unmistakably taught. We shall discuss how the author of the Gītā reconciles these two conflicting conceptions in its proper place. It is sufficient to quote here a few instances of both these modes of thinking in the Gītā. As regards the view of immanence, nothing could be more explicit than the following :—

“The Splendour, issuing from the sun that enlighteneth the whole world, that which is in the moon and in fire, that splendour is to be known as from God. Permeating the soil He supports beings by His vital energy, and having become the delicious ‘Soma’ he nourishes all plants. Having become the Fire of Life, He takes possession of the bodies of breathing things, and united with the life-breathing. He digests the four kinds of Food.” (G. XV. 12-14).

As regards the view of transcendence, the most

beautiful and forcible utterance of the Poet is to be found in the verses (G. X. 42) which run thus : "Whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful, and mighty that is to be understood as going forth from a fragment of God's splendour But what is the use of all these details ? Having pervaded this whole Universe with one fragment of Himself, God abides." We have already noticed the relation between Nature and Soul (Prakrti and Purusa) in the previous sections and need not repeat our remarks here as to apparent similarity of the Gītā with the Sāmkhya system.

### (c) Doctrine of Gunas \*

143. All the Natural Sciences of the modern age, as we know them from the Western races, are based on certain fundamental principles and rest on a number of presuppositions or assumptions which are taken for granted, rather than proved or demonstrated. For example, the truths of the indestructibility of matter, and the law of the conservation of Energy and the Uniformity and Regularity of Natural Phenomena, are not questioned by any student of Physical Science, and the same is true of the principles of Natural selection and survival of the fittest and the struggle for existence among all living beings in the sphere of Biology. Again the law of thought, as studied by Logic, has to be postulated and

\* Lit Guna—A rope or string that binds or fastens things, generally translated as qualities or attributes, but as it is not an adjective or abstract quality, but substantive principle, I shall use a better and more appropriate word, Element as the equivalent of Guṇa.

observed by every Science worth the name. Similarly the ancient Indian speculations on the world were also carried on along certain lines of thinking, exactly defined by the Science of Logic and governed by methodological postulates, and the philosophical concepts employed by the Indian thinkers in their comprehensive study of the natural and the human world were not unlike the scientific concepts of matter and motion, force and energy as far as their universality and necessity were concerned. (vide Positive Science of the Hindus by Dr. B. N. Seal and *Gītāpatha* by Dwijendranath Tagore).

144. The doctrines of the three gunas or elements, viz., Sattva, (Reality or Perceptibility), Rajas, (Energy or Passion) and Tamas (Matter or Inertia), is one of those fundamental principles in Hindu Philosophy, which have dominated the entire field of ethical, religious and metaphysical literature in the pre-Buddhistic and subsequent ages. We shall enter into a detailed exposition and discussion of this theory, as we proceed with the systematic study of the *Gītā* Philosophy, when we shall show how these three Principles or Elements of Indian Philosophical systems bear a close resemblance to many of the modern conceptions of western Scientists and how they are related to the Kantian theory of Categories of the Understanding as vitiating our knowledge of the "Ding-an-Sich or thing-in-itself". At present we shall simply confine ourselves to the contents of the verses in the *Gītā* where the doctrine of Gunas has been put forth in details or indirectly referred to. It is in the verses 5-20 of the fourteenth chapter of the Poem that we meet with the

most systematic presentation of the theory of Gunas, and the whole of these 16 verses deserve to be quoted —

"Reality (vitality, or goodness), Energy (passion), Inertia (lifelessness, or inactivity) are the elements, born of Nature, that bind fast in the body the immortal dweller within. Of these Reality is from its stainlessness illuminator and free from suffering (healthy) and binds by the attachment to bliss and the attachment to wisdom : Energy is of the nature of passion and is due to the attachment and thirst for life, and it binds the dweller in the body by the attachment to action. Inertia is born of unwisdom, deluder of all embodied beings. It binds by heedlessness, indolence and sloth. Reality triumphs in bliss, Energy in action. Inertia, however, having shrouded wisdom triumphs on the contrary in heedlessness. Reality prevails by overpowering energy and Inertia, Energy prevails by overpowering Reality and Inertia, and Inertia prevails by overpowering Reality and Energy. When the light of wisdom manifests itself through all the gates of the body, then it may be known that Reality is on the ascendancy. Greed, impulse to action, undertaking of actions, restlessness and desire—these arise on the ascendancy of Energy. Darkness, stagnation, heedlessness, delusion—these are born of the increase of Inertia. If Reality prevails when the embodied one goes to dissolution, then he goes forth to the spotless worlds of the great sages. Having gone to dissolution in the state of Energy he is born among those attached to action if dissolved in Inertia, he is born in the wombs of the senseless. It is said the fruit of a good action or

virtuous deed is of the quality of *sattva* and spotless, the fruit of Energy is pain, and that of Inertia is unwisdom. From Reality wisdom is born, and greed from Energy · heedlessness, delusion, and also unwisdom are of Inertia. They rise upwards who abide in reality, the Energetic dwell in the mid-region the Inert go downwards, dwelling in the vilest qualities. When the seer perceiveth no agent other than these Elements and knoweth that which is higher than them, he entereth into the being of God When the dweller in the body hath crossed over these three Elements, arising out of the body, he is liberated from birth, death, old age and sorrow and drinketh the nectar of immortality.

145. It will be seen that these *Gunas* are not merely metaphysical elements, but also bear an ethical significance, and a distinction of values is involved in the manner in which they have been presented to us in the *Gīta*, so that the *sattva* element is given a place of superiority over *Rajas* and *Tamas* and the *Rajas* is placed higher than the *Tamas*. As we have seen in a previous section, the concepts of *sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* have been employed by our Poet in their ethical bearing, in the three-fold classification or gradation of such of the modes of spiritual discipline and culture and of such of the religious institutions prevalent in his society, on which he wanted to pass his ethical judgment in the light of his own moral Ideal. But all of these Elements are equally regarded by the author of the *Gītā* as source of bondage for man and as such belonging to the phenomenal world and the real seer is he who goes beyond those

three Elements and knows the Self as free from and unaffected by these *gunas*

146. The marks of him who hath thus crossed over the three Elements are given in the concluding verses of the same chapter (G. XIV. 22-27) as follows :—

He who hateth not radiance, nor impulse to activity, nor even delusion, when present, nor longeth after them when they are absent, he who, seated as neutral, is unshaken by the Elements (Gunas), who saying “the Gunas run their course” standeth apart immovable : balanced in pleasure and pain, self-sufficient (abiding in himself), to whom a lump of earth, a rock and gold are alike, who is the same to loved and unloved, firm and equanimous in censure and praise, the same in honour and ignominy, the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings—he is said to have crossed over the Elements And he who serves God exclusively by the Yoga of devotion, crossing beyond the Elements, is fit to become one with Brahma , for God is the abode of Brahma and of imperishable nectar of immortality, of eternal righteousness, and of unending bliss.”

147 The term *guṇa* is used in the Gītā in a few other verses, not always in the same sense, and it may be helpful to us to bring them together and understand their significance in this connection

We have already noticed the occurrence of the term in G. XV 2, where the Aśvattha Tree representing the world is said to have as its buds the objects of the senses, which are nourished by the Gunas We meet with the term again in G. XVIII 40, which explicitly affirms the

all-pervadingness and all-rulingness of the Gunas in the following words, "there is not an entity either on the earth or again in heaven among the Gods, that is liberated from these three *Gunas* born of Nature." Then the verse G III 5, gives expression to the practical aspect of the Doctrine of *Gunas* viz that the *Gunas* are the sources of all human activity, as it is stated there that "None can even for an instant remain really actionless, for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the *Gunas* born of nature" And the same idea is conveyed in a still more explicit and elaborate form in the verses G. III. 27-29, viz "All actions are wrought by the *Gunas* of Nature only The self deluded by egoism, thinketh, "I am the doer." But he who knoweth the essence of the divisions of the qualities and activities (*Gunas* and *Karmas*), holding that the *Gunas* move amid *Gunas* is not attached. Those deluded by the *Gunas* of Nature are attached to the actions of the *Gunas*. The man of perfect knowledge should not unsettle these foolish people, whose knowledge is imperfect." The meaning of this passage will be clear, as we proceed in our systematic treatment of the Philosophy of the *Gītā*, but it is to be observed here that the word '*Gunakarmavibhāga*' (division of qualities and functions) is rather ambiguous, as it has been used in another connection (G IV 13) with a wholly different connotation, which has no reference to the doctrine of *Gunas* at all Even the expression "*Gunas* move amidst *Gunas*" has been interpreted by commentators in the sense of "sense organs moving among sense-objects" (cf. G. V. 9 , where the very expres-

sion "the senses move among the objects of senses" has been used almost in the identical significance).

148 This is another evidence for our supposition that at the time of the composition of the *Gītā*, the doctrine of Gunas, as that of many other theories, was still in the formation and that there was no clearness and distinction, nor fixity of definition of the concepts employed, nor systematic presentation of the theory according to a philosophical method. And this view we are maintaining about the Gunas exactly fits in with the nature and position of all the other philosophical, religious and ethical concepts that meet us in the *Gītā*.

149 We have already mentioned that the Gunas have no place in the Ultimate Reality or Divine Nature, which is above them all and that they are regarded as sources of bondage to nature, from which the human soul in its highest spiritual endeavour aspires to liberate itself (*G* XIV. 19-20). Indeed the very first occasion on which the concept of Gunas is employed in the poem in *G* II 45, shows that the term is used in a compound word, and the idea of the Gunas belonging to the phenomenal world is implicitly contained in the injunction that an ideal seer or actor or even a seeker after spiritual life should rise above, and be liberated from, the three Gunas, for Krsna tells Arjuna quite definitely and emphatically, "The Vedas deal with the three Gunas, be thou above these three Gunas" But the relation of the Gunas to God and the human soul is nowhere more unambiguously and positively asserted than in the following verses (*G* VII. 12-14).—"The conditions of *Sat-*

*tvas, Rajas, Tamas* (Reality, Energy, Inertia) are to be known as from God. God is not in them, nor are they in God. All this world, deluded by these states consisting of the three elements (*gunas*) knoweth not God who is above these, imperishable. This divine illusion of God, consisting of the elements (*gunas*) is hard to pierce ; they who come to God cross over this illusion."

150. From this representation of the doctrine of Gunas as consisting of illusion—albeit divine illusion (*Māyā*) to the Vedāntic Theory of *Māyā* as represented by Śankara is one long step. An unprejudiced critic and unsophisticated historian of the Indian Philosophy will discover in these and other similar verses evidences of the fact that the *Gītā* belongs to the period of transition between the spiritual intuitions of the Rsis of Upanisads and the ratiocinative speculations of the systematic philosophers of India.

151. This brief survey of the few isolated utterances of our author on the philosophy of Nature is sufficient to prove that the poem was composed in the midst of a highly intellectual environment, in which germs of later philosophical systems were already floating in the air and that the poet was not only fitted by his training and temperament to drink deep the ancient wisdom imparted by the speculative atmosphere of his age, but also a contributor of no mean order to the wealth of the Republic of letters, as he employed his poetic synthesis, originality of ideas and subtle insight into moral and metaphysical truths in the direction of developing the systematic philosophy of his country.

## SECTION VII.

### CONCEPTION OF GOD (*Theology*)

152. The individuality of the Poet and the nature of his intellectual environment are most clearly reflected in the passages of the *Gītā* where the idea of God is delineated. As a matter of fact the conception that a man forms of God is not only the result of the speculative development of the society or the race to which he belongs, but at the same time an index of the depth of his own spiritual experiences and height of his God-consciousness. In the case of the *Gītā*, the beauty of the poem reaches its climax and the character of its author shines in its effulgent splendour with the radiance of the wisdom of the Rsis of the Upanisadic age, exactly in those verses where the conception of God is unfolded step by step. We have had occasions to refer to the notion of God in the *Gītā* in connection with the moral and spiritual environments of the Poet in the preceding chapters, and also in connection with the sections dealing with the Poet's views of the world as related to God in the present chapter, as it is impossible to separate one particular element from another in an organic whole like our poem.

153. In the concept of God which forms the central pivot of the whole poem, the ethical, the metaphysical and the religious elements inseparably blend and mingle freely with one another with the ease and grace of an artistic creation. The idea of God in the *Gītā* ought to

dispel for ever from the intellectual—alas ! all-too intellectual—environment of our age all the sceptical tendencies and atheistical thoughts which enquire and debate on whether the idea of God as a product of the religious emotion corresponds to any reality and whether the intellectual and moral attributes of the Deity as conceived in our mind have their basis in or inhere in a substance that answers the religious man's conception of God (cf Alexander's "Space, Time and Deity"). These subtle questions agitating sophisticated minds never troubled the Indian seers like the Poet of the *Gītā*, who had an intuitive perception of the Divine Reality, resulting in an unshaken faith that needed no arguments or proofs for His Existence in its support any more than the belief in the existence of the solid earth on which we tread requires any logical reasoning or philosophical justification for the ordinary man

154 The metaphysical elements underlying the conception of God, as are found to be scattered throughout the poem, may be systematically classified under the following heads

- (i) God in His personal and transcendent aspect  
(Theism)
- (ii) God in His impersonal and immanent aspect  
(Pantheism)
- (iii) God as both transcendent and immanent (Pan-entheistic conception)
- (iv) Relation of God to the bondage and illusion of man.

## (a) VARIETIES AND GRADATION IN DIVINE NATURE.

(i) *God as Personal and Transcendent. (Theism).*

155. The very first representation of the Divine nature that meets us in the *Gītā* is that of a Person who is interested in the affairs of the world and descends to the earth in the form of a human Being in order to realise an ethical end. "Though unborn, the Imperishable Self and also the Lord of all beings, presiding over nature, which is His own, He is yet born through His own power. Whenever there is decay of righteousness, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then He himself comes forth. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, He is born from age to age" (G. IV. 6-8). As we have said in a previous chapter, the theory of incarnation implied in these verses has its origin in the Upaniṣadic soil and forms the root of the later development of the Vaisnavaic conception of the Descent of God along realistic lines. In G. V 29, God is said to be "the Enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the Mighty Ruler of all the worlds and the Lover of all beings." A still more personal conception of God is found in the verses G. IX 17-19 where God is declared to be the Father of this Universe, the Mother, the Supporter, the Grandson, the Holy One, Husband, Lord, Witness, Lover, (Origin, Dissolution, Foundation, Treasure-house, and the Seed imperishable) He gives heat, holds back and sends forth the rain. (He is Immortality and also Death, being and non-being.)"

156. It will be seen that the spirit of the Upanisads pervades the entire thought of these lines in that side by side with the attributes of theistic and personal God, there are tinges of pantheistic conception of an immanent and impersonal Being. As we have stated before, the distinction between Theism and Pantheism was not so sharp and ultimate with the ancient thinkers of India as it is with the modern western philosophers, and the Upanisads abound in verses where the pantheistic and theistic, immanent and transcendent notions of Divinity occur in such natural conjunction as if no incongruity was suspected or known to exist between them. It is the theistic conception of God that lies at the basis of such beautiful verses as the following, where the sublime ideal of devotion and self-abnegation is taught in its most exquisite form.—“Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offrest, whatsoever thou givest, whatsoever thou doest, of austerity, do thou that as an offering unto God” (G. IX. 27) “On God fix thy mind, be devoted to God, sacrifice to God, prostrate thyself before God, uniting thus the self with God, having God as thy Supreme Goal, thou shalt come unto God” (G. IX. 33). He who doeth actions for God, whose supreme good He is, His devotee freed from attachment without hatred of any being, he cometh unto God (G. XI. 55). “They who with mind fixed on God, ever united with God, worship Him endowed with faith supreme, these are best in Yoga” (G. XII. 2). “Renouncing mentally all works in God, intent on God, resorting to the Yoga of discrimination, have thy thought ever on

d. Thinking on God, thou shalt overcome all obstacles by His grace" (G. XVIII. 56, 57.) "Flee unto His shelter with all thy being, by His grace thou shalt gain the supreme peace, the ever-lasting dwelling-place.....Merge thy mind in God, be His Devotee, sacrifice to Him, prostrate thyself before Him, thou art come ever to Him. .....Abandoning all duties, come unto Him alone for shelter, sorrow not, God will liberate thee from all sins." (G. XVIII. 62, 65, 66).

(ii) *God as Impersonal and Immanent (Pantheism)*.

157. As in the Upanisads so in the Gītā, the omniscience of God is represented in a way that makes it difficult for a superficial observer not to identify the ītāic conception of God with the pantheistic, even here theistic elements are not altogether absent. Thus there are passages in the Gītā which seem to combine both the pantheistic and theistic ideas of God with the predominance of the former. For example, in G. XIII. 3-18, God is declared to be the object of knowledge or that which ought to be known, that which being known immortality is enjoyed, and the divine attributes are represented as below—"The beginning-less, Supreme Brahman, called neither being nor non-being, having hands and feet everywhere, eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, all-hearing, dwelling in the world, enveloping all, shining with all sense-faculties without any senses, unattached, supporting everything and free from qualities, and yet enjoying qualities, without and within all beings, immovable and movable, by reason of His subtlety im-

Deity by itself. There are, however passages in the Gītā where it seems impossible to escape the pantheistic interpretation e.g. "God is the oblation, God the sacrifice · God the mantram, God the butter, God the fire, and God the burnt offering" (G. IX. 16) Here all the constituent materials and elements and parts of a sacrificial ceremony are regarded as Divine, and God is identified with each one of them. But even here it is not unlikely that the author meant only to convey the idea of God's being present in each and every part of Sacrificial acts.

(iii) *Pantheistic view of God as both Immanent and Transcendent.*

161. A casual reader of the Xth and XIth chapters of the Gītā will be bewildered by the mass of contradictions and confusions which seem to vitiate the idea of God represented by the poet in them. For not only are the theistic and pantheistic concepts placed side by side, but also attributes mutually contradicting and opposing each other are applied indiscriminately to Godhead. For instance, God is generally conceived to be transcendent in one chapter and to be immanent in the other. God is sometimes said to be unknowable and sometimes knowable, now He is regarded as a Person and addressed as Friend, Father and seen in human relations, and again as the totality of the cosmos itself. The tenth chapter identifies God with all that is the highest, the best and most brilliant, beautiful and sublime in the creation, and describes His Manifestation in the various aspects or parts of the Universe in a way that is far from pantheistic

But in the next chapter (XI), the Universe is conceived of as the form of God very much after the fashion of the pantheists, and all the phenomena of nature and activities of men are regarded as doings of God, leaving very little room for the freedom of the human will and the element of moral responsibility, which forms the basis of our moral judgment about good and evil, right and wrong. The students of philosophy however will recognise in these two modes of the representation of Divinity in our poem nothing but a fit illustration in a concrete form of what is known as the pantheistic school of metaphysics. We shall take the most prominent verses of these two chapters as instances to exemplify the pantheistical position of the Poet as regards the concept of God, when philosophically considered. There are a good deal of mythical allusions and historical materials in these two chapters of the poem which may serve as data for the determination of the age of the Author and nature of the society, of which the *Gītā* was a product and we shall try to reap as good a harvest as we possibly can from these data in the next chapter of our book. At present we are concerned with the conception of God during the age of the *Gītā*. We shall simply confine ourselves to the speculative aspect of the Poet's representation of God as we find it in the Xth and the XIth chapters, and therefore omit all historical and mythical references therein.

(b) GOD AS THE SOURCE AND ROOT OF ALL AND THE ESSENCE OF ALL.

162. God is to be known as the great Lord of the

world, unborn and beginningless (G. X. 3), all virtues, intellectual, moral and spiritual, e.g. reason, wisdom, non-illusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, calmness, harmlessness, equanimity, contentment, austerity, alms-giving come from Him, all pairs of opposites—pleasure and pain, existence and non-existence, fear and courage, fame and obloquy, and all the various characteristics of beings are from Him (G. X. 4-5). Seven great Ṛsis, the ancient four and the Manus partake of His Being and are creations of His Mind, of them this race was generated (G. X. 6). God is the Source of all, all evolves from Him (G. X. 8). He is the Supreme Brahman, Supreme Abode, Supreme Purity, Eternal, Divine Spirit, the Primeval Deity unborn, the Lord (G. X. 12), Source of beings, God of gods, Ruler of the world (G. X. 15). God is the Self, seated in the heart of all beings (G. X. 20). He is the glorious Sun among the luminous, and the Moon among the constellations (G. X. 21), of the Vedas, He is the Sāma-Veda, of the senses, He is the mind, of the living beings, the intelligence, of expanses of water (lakes) He is the ocean; (24) of speeches, He is the One-syllable (OM). of the sacrifices, He is the sacrifice of silent repetitions (Japam); of immovable things, the Himālayas (25), the Aśvattha of all the trees (26), of men, the monarch (27); of calculators He is Time, of wild beasts, the king of beasts (lion) (30); of purifiers, He is the wind; Makara of fishes, of streams, the Ganges is He : (31), of sciences, the Science concerning the Self. He is power of reasoning in debators (34); of letters, the letter 'A' He is, and the duality of the com-

pound. He is the everlasting Time, the Supporter, whose face turns everywhere, the all-devouring Death, and the Origin of all to come, of feminine qualities, fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intelligence, constancy and forgiveness, of seasons, the flowery (spring) is He; of the cheat the gambling, the splendour of all splendid things, of the victory, the determination, the truth of the truthful, of rulers, He is the sceptre, of those that seek victory, He is statesmanship, of secret, He is also silence, the knowledge of knowers is He and whatever is the seed of all beings that is He, nor is there aught, moving or unmoving that may exist bereft of Him (38). There is no end of His divine powers What has been declared is illustrative of His infinite glory (40). Whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful and mighty, that is to be understood as going forth from a fragment of His splendour (41) What is the use of knowing all these details ? Having pervaded the whole universe with one fragment of Himself, God abides further beyond (42).

163. The aspect of Divine transcendence has been so clearly and beautifully set forth in this chapter that one can hardly doubt the influence of monotheistic fervour on the Poet and his environments. Besides the transcendental character of the Divinity is also manifest in the verses where God is regarded as the combination of opposites (e.g. G. X. 4 & 5), and where God is said to be unknown and unknowable, e.g. "The gods and the great Rsis know not the forthcoming of God, for He is the beginning of all gods and great Rsis" (G. X. 2) "Neither the Devas (angels or gods) nor Dānavas (demons) can com-

prehend His Form (G. X. 14). Himself knoweth Himself by Himself" (G. X. 15). No doubt the pantheistic ideas may be read in a few verses of the Xth chapter e.g. "God is the beginning, the end and the middle of all beings" (20). "the beginning and ending and also the middle of Creation" (32): but even in these expressions, nothing more than the all-pervading omnipresence of God may have been intended. When however we pass on to the Xth chapter, where the universe is represented as the body of God and all things, forces and activities in the world of nature and mind are conceived to be living, moving and having their being in God, the pantheistic notion of immanence and the divinity of the cosmic world appears too overwhelming to be mistaken.

(c) GOD AS REPRESENTED IN THE FORM OF THE  
UNIVERSE AND MANIFESTED ACTIVELY IN THE  
WORLD-PROCESS (IMMANENT AND SUPER-  
PERSONAL ASPECT)

164. In the XIth chapter, at the special request of a Devotee (Arjuna), God (in the form of Krṣṇa) is said to reveal by His special grace His own invisible Self with the Universe as His body. This form Divine is described in the Gītā as follows .—

"The form of God is beheld as a hundredfold, a thousandfold, various in kind divine, various in colours and shapes. All the presiding Deities of Nature (e.g. The Ādityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Aśvins as also the Māruts, i.e. the Nature-gods worshipped during the Vedic age) are beheld in His Body, as also many mar-

vels never seen before this Here and now the whole Universe, movable and immovable, is seen standing in one in His Body with aught else one desires to see.... With many mouths and eyes, with many visions of marvel, with many divine ornaments, with many upraised divine weapons, wearing divine necklaces, and vestures, anointed with fragrances, the all-marvellous God is seen boundless, with face turned everywhere If the splendour of a thousand suns were to blaze out together in the sky, that might resemble the glory of that Mahātmā. There was beheld the whole Universe, divided into manifold parts, standing in one in the body of the Deity of Deities All the gods were seen within the form of God, all grades of beings with distinctive marks,\* Brahmā, the Lord, upon his lotous-throne, the Rṣis all, and serpents, the Divine, with mouths, eyes, arms, breasts multitudinous God was seen everywhere, of unbounded form, having no beginning, middle or end. Lord of the Universe of Infinite Forms, a mass of splendour radiating in all directions, with discus, mace, tiara. He was beheld, blazing as fire, as the sun dazzling the gaze, from all sides in the sky immeasurable, the supremely knowable, unperishing, the supreme essence of the

\*This shows that God was not conceived of as the Indeterminate and indefinable Being of Spinoza in which all qualities and distinctions were merged and all individualities were lost, but rather regarded as the infinite universal whole which comprehended all finite particulars in itself as moments in its Eternal Life.

world, changeless, the guardian of Eternal Religion. He is thought of as the immemorial spirit; nor source, nor midst, nor end has He, infinite with force, unnumbered arms; the sun and moon are His eyes; His face is seen as sacrificial fire blazing, its splendour burning up the worlds; by Him alone are filled the earth, the heavens, and all the regions that are stretched between: the triple worlds sink down before His awful manifested Form. To Him the troops of Gods enter in, some invoking Him in awe with joined palms, groups of Maharsis and the liberated ones cry "All hail," chanting His praises with resounding songs, Rudras, Vasus, Sādhyas, Ādityas, Viśwadevas, the Aśvinīs, Māruts, Uṣmapās, Gandharvas, Yaksas, Siddhas and Asuras (i.e. all super-natural beings) in wandering multitudes beholding His mighty Form with many mouths and eyes, with feet, thighs and arms innumerable, vast-bosomed, set with many fearful teeth, the worlds see terror-struck (including the speaker, Arjuna). Radiant with many colours, He touches heavens with opened mouths and vast shining eyes, His sight produces a shivering in the inmost self of the spectator, whose strength is withered and peace disturbed. His faces are set with fierce teeth like Time's destroying flames; the sons of Dhrtarāstra, and with them the multitude of all these kings of earth, Bhīsma and Drona, the sons of Suta, and all the noblest warriors of the Pāñdavas—all of them, hurrying, rush into the gaping mouths of God, tremendous-toothed and terrible to see, some caught within the gaps between His teeth are seen, their heads crushed and ground to powder. As river-floods impetu-

ously rush, hurling their waters into ocean's lap, so fling themselves into His flaming mouth in haste these mighty warriors of the human race. As moths fly headlong with quickened speed into a flaming light to fall destroyed, so also these in hasty steps enter within His mouth to be destroyed, on every side, all-swallowing, fiery-tongued, He licks up mankind, devouring all, His splendour filleth all space, the Universe is burning with his blazing rays. He is Time laying desolate the world, made manifest on earth to slay mankind, not one of all these warriors ranged for strife will escape death, even without Arjuna's undertakings. By God they are already overcome, Arjuna is enjoined to be the outward cause only Arjuna is asked to kill Drona and Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karna and all the other warriors here, who are slain by God already" Here the transcendent and personal aspect of God is brought into prominence again, e.g., "In His magnificence rightly the world rejoiceth, singing hymns to Him, the demons fly in fear to every quarter, the hosts of liberated ones fall prostrate He is the First Cause, greater even than Brahman, Infinite God of gods, home of all worlds, He is unperishing, Being, non-Being and what is beyond these. First of the gods, most ancient spirit, supreme receptacle of all that lives, knower, known, the supreme abode, by His infinite Form the universe is pervaded He is Vāyu, Yama, Agni (god of fire), Candra (god of moon), Varuṇa (god of water), Father, grandsire of all. Hail, Hail to Him, a thousand times all Hail, Hail unto Him, again and again all Hail. One should bow prostrate in front of

Him and behind Him, fall prostrate on every side to Him who is all; in power boundless, measureless in strength, He embraces all and is therefore All." Here the human aspect of Krsna is again referred to by Arjuna. "If thinking thee but friend, importunately, I called thee O Krsn, O Jādava, O Friend, unaware of Thy majesty, out of carelessness or fond love, if jesting, I have shown to thee irreverence while at play, reposing in beds, sitting or during my meals, alone or in the presence of others, forgive my error." He is Father of Worlds, of all that moves and stands, Preceptor worthy of reverence, greater than all, there is none like to Him. How can there be anything greater than He? His power is pre-eminent in all the worlds. Arjuna therefore falls before Him prostrating his body, to propitiate that worshipable Lord and asks Him to forgive him as father bears with his son, as friend with friend, and as lover with the beloved. Having seen that which none hath seen before, his heart is glad and yet faileth in fear and prays Him to show him the other form again by His grace; the Lord of thousand arms and Universal Form is asked to put on again His four-armed shape diademed and with mace and discus in the hand.

This form is said to be revealed only by the Divine Yoga of God, this vision is unattainable by sacrifices, Vedas, alms, works and sharp austerity and deep study, but it is only by devotion to Him alone, that one can know, see and enter into His being in essence.\*

---

\*As regards the possible interpolations in these two chapters from the poems of Vaisnava editors of the Mahābhārata vide Part III. of the Bhagavadgītā and Modern Scholarship.

(d) POET'S GENIUS, ORIGINALITY AND  
INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION.

165. This wonderful revelation of the Divine Essence and its concrete manifestations in the processes of human history is one of the most original and valuable contributions of our Poet to the world-literature, and in this chapter more than anywhereelse his creative genius and artistic appreciation, his deep religious fervour and moral faith, as well as his synthetic unity of intellect and imagination in a clear intuitive insight are displayed in their best and highest. If the Poet had not left us anything but the delineation of the Divine Form and its various potencies as they are presented in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the *Gītā*, or if all other verses of the poem except those contained in these two chapters were lost to us for ever, even then the author and his works would have been immortalised in the unrecorded pages of human history for the lofty conception of Godhead no less than for the sublimity of artistic execution exhibited in these two chapters. But we must reserve our exposition and appreciation of these passages for the constructive and systematic part of our work in a separate volume.

(e) POETIC VALUATION OF THE TWO  
OPPOSED SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT  
AND CULTURE.

166. It is not to be imagined that the author of the Divine Song was not aware of the two conflicting world-views of Transcendence or Immanance, nor that he was not alive to the distinction between the Theistic and

Pantheistic schools of Theological Metaphysic, for as we have already mentioned in connection with the religious environment of our poet, there is a clear and unambiguous statement in the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā* (XII. 1-8) to the effect that of the two classes of devotees—those who worship God in constant communion and those who worship the Indestructible and Unmanifested (the neutral Brahman)—the adherents of the conception of transcendental personal God are better than the advocates of the immanent and pantheistic conception, although the latter also attain God with greater difficulty. Then again the *Gītā* contains verses where a distinction seems to be made between personal God and impersonal Brahma, and where the superiority of one over the other appears to be maintained with an uncertain tone and in an ambiguous language, e.g. the verses G. XIV. 26-27 tell us, "He who serveth God exclusively by the Yoga of devotion, he crossing beyond the qualities is fit to become one with Brahman, for God is the abode of Brahman and of the indestructible nectar of immortality, of immemorial righteousness and of unending bliss. Whether there is a self-contradiction in thought here or whether the conflicting world-views (esp. of the views concerning the nature of God and His relation to the world) as indicated in these passage can be reconciled or removed by logic or philosophy—is a question which we shall take up for our consideration in the proper place. Here we are concerned only with the picture of the character and environments of the Poet that is presented to us by our examination of these conceptions, and there could be no

two opinions about the moral qualities, religious earnestness and philosophical ability of the author and about the height and depth of the thought-circle in which he must have received his training and contributed his own share of the wealth produced by intellectual labour.

167. There are three other points connected with the conception of God in the *Gītā* which seem to lead us logically, if not historically, to the various schools of philosophical thought represented by the great system-builders like Bādarāyana and Kapila, Patañjali and their followers, viz (1) the Relation of God to Man and Nature, (2) God's Māyā and Yoga with regard to the ignorance and bondage of man, (3) Divisions of Divine Nature or variety of aspects in Divine Potencies, to which we may now turn our attention.

---

### SECTION VIII.

#### RELATION OF GOD TO MAN AND TO THE WORLD.

168. The *Gītāic* theory of incarnation which is based, as we have seen, on an ethico-religious synthesis of the Vedāntic conceptions of God and the Soul, involves the idea of a loving just God who takes interest in the human affairs and assumes human forms from age to age in

order to vindicate His moral government of the world by protecting the good, destroying the wicked, and firmly establishing righteousness (G. IV. 6-9) God is regarded as Creator of the four castes, which are divided according to qualities and actions In G. III 22-24, God is said to be constantly active with a view to set up a moral standard for mankind and also to save the world from ruin. "There is nothing in the three worlds that should be done by God, nor anything unattained that might be attained, yet He undertakes action, for if He did not set Himself to action constantly and unceasingly men all around would follow His path, this world would fall into ruin; if He did not perform action, He should be the author of confusion of castes and should destroy these creatures."

169. But side by side with this creative nature of God and His active relations with the world and human beings, there are passages where the poet speaks of a non-active God (Akartā), whom no actions affect and who does not desire any fruit of action (G. IV. 13-14). We find the same idea again in G. V. 14-18, "The Lord of the world produceth not the agency nor actions, nor the union together of action and its fruit, nature however runs her course. The Lord accepteth neither the evil-doing, nor yet the well-doing of any. Wisdom is enveloped in unwisdom, therewith mortals are deluded" Here the terms 'Prabhu' and 'Bibhu' (Lord) are used to signify the Supreme Self",<sup>\*</sup> who is also the self of all and

---

\*That these do not refer to the individual soul alone is clear from the next two verses

all attributes of agency, good or evil, are denied of Him, and ascribed to Nature alone.

170. Again the mysterious character of the relation between God and the world is more explicitly stated in the verses G. IX. 4-6, which tell us that all this world is pervaded by God in unmanifested aspect, all beings have root in Him. He is not rooted in them, nor have beings root in Him—such is His sovereign Yoga. “The support of beings, yet not rooted in beings, His self is the efficient cause of all beings. As the mighty air everywhere moving is rooted in the ether, so all beings rest rooted in Him, thus is He to be realised” . . Then, we are told, inspite of all the processes of continuous creation and destruction of the world which are periodically going on through the active agency of God, these works do not bind Him, who is enthroned on high, like an indifferent one (ascetic), unattached to actions (G. IX. 8)

171. This view of the inactivity of the Self has also been taught in the Gītā XIII 30, 32-39, where Nature (Prakrti) is said to perform all actions, the Self remaining actionless, being beginningless and without qualities. “The imperishable Supreme Self, though seated in the body, worketh not nor is affected, as the omnipresent ether is not affected, by reason of its subtlety, so seated everywhere in the body, the Self is not affected Compare with this the conception of God as all-ruling and all-active which we have found in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the Gītā, and which meets us again in the verse G. XVIII 61 “The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings to revolve by His illusive

power, as though they were mounted on a potter's wheel," and the self-contradiction and mutual opposition of thought involved in these passages will be apparent.

172. Besides this anomaly, there are other philosophical problems that suggest themselves in these passages and the curiosity of our readers is naturally excited as to how the author of the Divine Song would solve them according to his conception of God. For instance, (i) how could man be held responsible for his wrong-doing, if everything was done by nature or by God? (ii) How could God be altogether acquitted, if He left human beings free to do as they chose and thereby created the possibility of moral evils? (iii) What is the nature of this sovereign yoga of God, in virtue of which all beings are said to be rooted in Him and yet not rooted in Him, and God is said to be their support, yet not to be in them? (iv) What is the meaning of the Divine Māyā by which all beings are made to work mechanically as though mounted on a potter's wheel and yet to feel as though they were free agents?

173. All we can say in reply to these enquiries at the present stage is that the poet of the Gītā was not a systematic philosopher, nor a versifier of tenets derived from the philosophical schools of other thinkers, but was primarily a poet and a seer *par excellens*, who had intuitive vision of certain moral and philosophical truths, and strung them together in tune with the celestial music of his heart, and that the Gītā is the visible expression of this Divine Song in the form of an æsthetico-

religious unity. The Revelations made to the Seer-Poet are not reasoned truths in the form of logical propositions or philosophical speculations, but still all the truths contained in the various parts of the poem form an organic whole and exhibit an inner harmony, which one can discover only by a process of analysis and abstraction from its constituent elements or members, and then recombining them into a new grouping after logical patterns and thereby reconstructing an intellectual system or rational synthesis which can fulfil the highest canons of philosophical truth.

174 The problems arising out of the *Gītāic* conception of God are indeed the problems of all philosophical and religious treatises, and the author of the poem was not unfamiliar with such problems and their solution. But he chose for his work a form and a method which could not lend themselves to argumentative or reasoned thinking without impairing the artistic beauty of the work as a poem. A careful reader will however realise, if he enters into the spirit of the poem that there is neither contradiction nor evasion in the thoughts of our author with regard to the vital truths of philosophy and religion. We shall see how the answers to many of these problems are contained in the *Gītā*, when we proceed to the systematic account of its philosophy. Suffice it to mention here with reference to questions (i) and (ii) that philosophically considered, there is no such opposition between the omnipotence or all-activity of God on the one hand and the freedom of will and moral responsibility of man on the other, or between the mechanism

and determinism in Nature and moral freedom of the human soul, and the views of the *Gītā* on these points are perfectly in accord with the Metaphysics and Ethics of Immanuel Kant, the great German Philosopher, who is in a way the father of modern thought. For, according to Kant as well, all moral actions, when empirically viewed, are subject to nature-necessity, and yet transcendently speaking, they flow from the free will of the agent, and as such are subject to moral judgments. In the light of the distinction between phenomenal and noumenal aspects of the world, the opposition between the all-activity of God and the all-activity of nature or between the view that God is the sole active principle and Nature only His passive instrument and the view that Nature is the sole cause of the Universe and God is perfectly indifferent and inactive—all these oppositions will be found to disappear. What concerns us most here is the intellectual equipment of our Poet whose metaphysical grasp could bring out those highest truths of Ethics and Religion, of which it has taken humanity over two thousand years to understand the inner meaning, and which anticipated conclusions established in the Critique of Practical Reason by the great thinker of Königsberg.\*

175. We can easily imagine the philosophical atmosphere of the age and the country in which such a

\*This point will be made clearer, when we discuss the Philosophy of the *Gītā* in another Volume.

wonderful monument of poetic representation of the deepest truths of Ethics and Metaphysics could be produced. Those critics who maintain that these passages in the Gītā actually involve a contradiction and confusion of thought, and thereby prove that its author belonged to the transitional period between the age of the Upaniṣads and that of philosophical systems are no doubt right in their conclusion, but they are guilty of assigning false reasons for their conclusion. For, strange as it may appear, the Poet who composed this Divine Song was born at a period earlier than that of the birth of systematic philosophy in India, but he was gifted with the genius of a thinker and an artist at the same time, and hence we are struck by the poetic synthesis of the highest philosophical truths intuitively revealed to his mind, as has been exhibited in the Gītā.

As regards the questions (iii) and (iv) there are more distinct and explicit statements elsewhere in the Gītā, and of these we shall speak in the next section.

---

## SECTION IX.

### GOD'S MAYA AND YOGA, (TRANSCENDENTAL POWER) AS RELATED TO HUMAN IGNORANCE AND BONDAGE.

176. In the *Gītā* VII 12-15, we are told "The natures that are of purity, passion and darkness—all these are to be known as from God, nor He in them, but they in Him All this world, deluded by these natures, consisting of the three Gunas (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas) knoweth not God, who is above them and imperishable This Divine illusion of God (*Māyā*) consisting in the Gunas is hard to pierce; they who come to God, cross over this illusion (*Māyā*). The evil-doing, the deluded the vilest men,—whose wisdom has been destroyed by illusion (*Māyā*), who have embraced the nature of demons, they do not come to God." Again in the verses 24-28 of the same chapter, we find the same conception still more elaborated. "Those devoid of Reason think of God, the unmanifest, as having manifestation, knowing not His supreme nature, imperishable and most excellent. Nor is God revealed to all, being enveloped in His magical illusion (*yoga-māyā*). Thus deluded, the world knoweth not the unborn, the imperishable. By the delusion of the pairs of opposites, springing from desire and aversion, all beings on creation enter into complete delusion. But those men of pure deeds, in whom sin is come to an end, they freed from delusive pairs of opposites, worship God, steadfast in vows." The

words Bibhūti, Yoga and Māyā are also used in the sense of divine potencies and miracles in the following verses, "He who knows in essence this Bibhūti and Yoga (sovereignty and magic) of mine, is united with me in unfaltering Yoga, there is no doubt thereof." (X 7). "Deign to tell me without reserve of thine glories (Bibhūtis), by which glories thou remainest pervading these worlds" (X 16). "In detail tell me again of thy power and manifestation (Yoga and Bibhūti) (X 18) "I will declare to thee my divine glory by its chief characteristics, there is no end of details of mine (X 19). "There is no end of my Divine Powers (Bibhūti), what has been declared is illustrative of my infinite glory" (X 40) Kṛṣṇa (i.e. God incarnate) is addressed as the Lord of Yoga (Yogeśwara) in XI 14. "Behold my sovereign Yoga" (XI 8). "The great Lord of Yoga, Hari, showed to Pārtha His Supreme Form Divine (XI 9) "By my favour thou hast seen this loftiest Form radiant, entire, and infinite and supreme, revealed by my Yoga (Ātmayoga), that none except thyself hath ever seen" (XI 47)

177. That delusion is the cause of human miseries and sufferings, and Divine knowledge and Divine grace are the only means of liberation from it,—is hinted in many verses, e.g. the men of demoniacal disposition are described as being "enmeshed in the web of delusion" (G XVI 16), and said to be ever thrown down by God into demoniacal wombs, thus cast into demoniacal wombs, deluded birth after birth, not attaining God, they sink into lowest depths (G. XVI. 19-20) Again,

he who undeluded knoweth God as the Supreme Spirit (*Purusottama*), is said to be all-knowing and to worship God with his whole being (G. XV. 19). Those who carp at the teaching of God (in the *Gītā*) and do not act thereon senseless, deluded in all knowledge, these mindless ones are to be known as fated to be destroyed (III. 32). Having known this (wisdom) thou shalt not again fall into this confusion, for by this thou wilt see all beings without exception in the self, and then in Me (i.e. God)". (VI. 35).

178. When we take these passages for consideration along with the conceptions of delusion and illusion referred to before in the verses (G. V. 15 and XVIII. 61), a flood of light is thrown on the otherwise dark region of speculations about the origin and growth of Indian Philosophical systems and their relations to one another. The fact that the terms (1) *Māyā* and (2) *Yoga* have been used on the one hand in the sense of divine powers and glories, which are hidden from all human beings but revealed to a few pious souls, and on the other hand to convey respectively the meanings of (1) the bondage of delusion and illusion which binds the soul to ignorance and misery and (2) the processes of spiritual culture through which the soul thus separated by ignorance and illusion is reunited to God —unmistakably points towards the conclusion that originally *both* these words had their source in a Theistic religious atmosphere, and were associated with Divine potencies or supernatural powers, by which the Divine Essence envelops itself from the eyes of mortals, and

that it was in course of the later development of philosophical thought that the concept 'Māyā' was used first to mean objectively a power belonging to God as His Potency, and then subjectively employed as (a) kind of impotence of the human soul or (b) an inherent weakness in the form of *Avidyā* (i.e. ignorance or illusion), and that the term Yoga, which objectively speaking referred to the Divine Power to conceal or reveal Himself at His will to men according to their merits, was subjectively applied to the moral and religious disciplines, mentioned in the various *Yoga-śāstras*, by which men could attain to a vision of God or to a union with Him.\*

179. As a matter of fact the two meanings of the terms 'Yoga and Māyā', which we have distinguished as objective and subjective and which may now be regarded as the earlier and later connotations of the terms, are very closely related to each other, and the former will be seen to logically lead to the latter, as they are two aspects of one and the same reality or the convex and concave sides of the same religious experience. For it appears indifferent to us whether we conceive of God as working His divine wonders or miracles (Māyā and Yoga) so as to keep Himself hidden from the eyes of mortals and to reveal His beatific form

\* The point will be further discussed in a separate book, as regards the development of the theistic and atheistic development of the concept of Yoga in the present forms of Yoga and Sāṅkhya systems of philosophy.

only to the blessed few or we conceive of men as being under a perpetual illusion or ignorance (*Māyā*) which shuts them off from the vision of God and from which only the choicest souls can free themselves by certain processes of religious culture and moral discipline (*Yoga*). An unprejudiced student of Indian Philosophy will not fail to recognise here the characteristics of a transition period in which terms, which have now become commonplace in the philosophical vocabulary with peculiar technical meanings assigned to them, had not yet attained any definiteness and fixity of connotation, but were loosely employed in different senses on different occasions, according as it suited the wishes of the author or the sequence of thought in the context. It is evident that the present acceptations of the terms *Yoga* and *Māyā* in the *Yoga* and *Vedānta* systems of philosophy respectively were later products, growing out of the philosophical atmosphere in which the *Gītā* had its origin. The same truth holds good of many other *Vedānta* and *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* concepts employed in the *Gītā* and even as regards the use of the terms *Vedānta*, *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* themselves in our poem

---

## *SECTION X.*

### DIVISION IN DIVINE NATURE—VARIETIES OF DIVINE POTENCIES.

180 There are many verses in the *Gītā* which speak of a duality of aspects or a Trinity of manifestations of the one God, and thereby raise important problems of Philosophy and even indicate the relationship between the *Gītā* and some schools of Indian Philosophy. For instance, (a) we are told in the verses, VIII 4-5, that God has a higher and a lower nature, and an eightfold division in the latter. "Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether, Mind and Reason and also Egoism—these are the eight-fold divisions of My Nature This is the inferior. Know My other Nature, the higher, the spiritual element, by which the universe is upheld". (b) Again in the eighth chapter the verses 18, 20-22, represent three stages of Reality in a graduated scale, culminating in the Supreme Spirit, which is the highest "From the unmanifested all the manifested stream forth at the coming of the day; at the coming of night they dissolve even in that very "Unmanifested." . But higher than that 'unmanifested' there is another unmanifested, Eternal, which on the destroying of all beings, is not destroyed That unmanifested is called the "Indestructible"—it is named the Highest Path. They who reach it return not. That is the Supreme Abode of God. He, the Highest Spirit, may be reached by unswerving single-minded devotion to Him: in Him all

beings abide, by Him all this is pervaded". Here we are to conceive of God as existing in three different steps of a hierarchy—though embracing all, viz , (i) the world of manifestation consisting in the coming and going of multitude of beings during the perpetually repeated cycles of existence. (ii) the Unmanifested background or substratum, from which these changing manifold proceed at creation and in which they are merged at dissolution, (iii) the higher Unmanifested the immortal Spirit, which is the highest above all' \* (c) In the G XIV. 3-4 we have the picture of a paternal and a maternal element in the creation of this universe, and the birth of all beings is attributed to the germ placed by the former on the womb of the latter, although the germ and the womb are said to belong to the same Reality. "My womb is the Mahat Brahma (Nature, which is designated as the 'Great Eternal'). in that I place the germ. thence is the origination of all beings In whatsoever wombs mortals are produced the 'Great Eternal' is the womb, and I their generating father" (d) Then in the concluding verses of the fifteenth chapter, the author of the *Gītā* speaks of three kinds of *Purusas* or spiritual principles in the Universe, of which the highest is God, the Supreme Soul (*Puru-sottama*). "There are two Spirits in this world—the destructible and the indestructible, all beings are

---

\* God is here represented as existing in three forms, the Higher Unmanifest (Indestructible), lower Unmanifest (destructible), visible or manifest world.

destructible, and the unchanging indwelling substance is called the "Indestructible" The Spirit is verily another, declared as the Supreme Self, He is the imperishable Lord, who pervading all the three worlds sustaineth them, since God is beyond the 'destructible' and is superior to the 'indestructible', He is proclaimed in the Veda and in the world as the 'Supreme Spirit' (XV. 16-18). (e) Lastly, we may mention the threefold designations of Brahman given at the end of the seventeenth chapter, which also seems to hint at the peculiar religious and philosophical environments of the age in which the Poet of the Gītā lived. "Aum, Tat, Sat" this has been considered the threefold designation of the Eternal By that were ordained of old Brāhmaṇas, Vedas, and sacrifices. We are then told how the worshippers of Brahman and the seekers after liberation commence acts of sacrifice, austerity and gift, with the pronunciation of Aum and Tat respectively and how the word 'Sat' is employed in various senses

181. Now if we look a little minutely into these concepts of the Gītā regarding the manifestations or potencies of God, there will be no difficulty in understanding the connection of our Poet with the Upaniṣadic speculations on the one hand and the philosophical and reasoned treatment of God and the Ultimate Reality, as presented in the Vedānta and Sañkhya-Yoga systems on the other One cannot help thinking that whether we consider (a) the conception of God as manifesting Himself in the lower world of material element (like earth, water, fire, ~~air~~) and men-

tal elements (like mind, intellect and egoism etc), and also in the higher life of the spirit. or (b) the conception of Reality as made up of three stages, the manifest, the unmanifest and the higher Unmanifest (which is God). or (c) of the created universe of beings as the joint-product of God and Nature (the Great Eternal), or (d) the three grades of spiritual principles—the destructible, the Indestructible and the Supreme Soul. or (e) lastly, of the three-fold designations of God as Aum, Tat, and Sat. the poem in which these concepts and terminology are found could not be far removed from the age of the older Upaniṣadic literature, in which the same conceptions and terms meet us perhaps in a less explicit and less systematic form. The Poet of the Gītā must have been brought up in the same intellectual and religious atmosphere as that of the Upanisadic age, and it is his familiarity with the speculations of the Ṛsis of the Upaniṣads that is reflected in these passages of the poem. We shall have to admit the indebtedness of the author of the Gītā to the Upanisads and indeed recognise the Vedāntic foundations of the poem by tracing the roots of its moral, religious and metaphysical doctrines in the various Upanisads. Thus it will appear that the Gītā is not only the milk, sweet as nectar, milched by Kṛṣṇa from the cow consisting of all the Upanisads, in the presence of Arjuna serving as a calf, and enjoyed by the wise, as the Indian tradition conceives it, but also the first attempt at a poetic synthesis of the philosophical world-views, and religious ideals of life, and ethical and spiritual disciplines for their reali-

sation, as inculcated in the Upaniṣads, as the Vedānta Sūtras are the first expression of a philosophical synthesis made by another Master-Mind—and that as I maintain, later than the Gītā—of all the apparently conflicting intuitions about the highest reality of God, about the nature of the world and of the soul, and about the future life and the intermediate processes or final stages of liberation, found scattered in the Upaniṣads.

182. Similarly one has simply to cast a glance on the Gītāic conception of the world and the Soul as emanating from the Supreme Spirit, and that of the evolution and dissolution of the Universe as proceeding from and leading to the Unmanifested (Nature), which again rests on a higher Unmanifest (i.e. God), and also on the idea of God and Nature as forming together the joint Creator (The Father and Mother respectively) of the created world, and one will recognise that the philosophical system of the Sāṅkhya with its dualism of Purusa and Prakrti (the Soul and Matter), both of which are without beginning and unmanifest, and its conception of evolution and dissolution, is a later degenerate form derived from the original Upanisadic, Gītāic or Vedāntic world-views, by leaving off the first Principle or the Highest Spirit of the latter. This line of development is not only in perfect accord with the evolution of philosophical from religious speculations in every country during the earliest period of human thinking, but also with the fact that there was a theistic form of Sāṅkhya much older than the present non-theistic Sāṅkhya system, and that the high honour and respect

in which the Sāṅkhyā system has been held in this country from ancient times and spoken of in the Mahābhārata literature, is largely due to its original theistic form, which was restored to it later on by the author of the Yoga-Sūtras, which is rightly regarded in India as 'Theistic (Seśvara) Sāṅkhyā.

---

## *SECTION XI*

### *CONCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE LIFE AND THE SUMMUM BONUM*

183 Besides the conceptions of knowledge, of the Soul, of Nature and of God, which we have considered up to now in this Chapter, the Gītā also contains other ideas of a metaphysical and theological nature which cannot fail to suggest the condition of the intellectual environment in the midst of which they arose. For example, when we analyse the various passages where the representations of future life and the character of the Summum Bonum or the final state of liberation and the means and conditions of attaining salvation are found in the Gītā, we shall discover certain fundamental beliefs and speculations about the human life and its place in the Cosmos, about the soul, its rebirth and its destiny, and about God and His relation to Nature and

the human mind, which underlie the whole system of metaphysical and theological doctrines of the Poet. We shall first of all take up for our consideration the conceptions of future life, of Heaven, and Hell, and then the idea of deliverance from the bondage of birth and notion of the Summum Bonum of human life as represented in the *Gītā*. It is remarkable that the *Gītā* contains not only words and phrases and passages which seem to countenance the crude and popular conceptions of hell and heaven, and which uphold freedom from cycles of rebirths and freedom from the bondage of actions as the goal of religious culture, but also a considerably large number of verses where the higher and nobler ideals of peace, bliss, perfection, the highest path and "the supreme abode", consisting in an everlasting and uninterrupted union with God or even absorption in Brahman are most emphatically and unequivocably maintained. This great variety of conceptions relating to the Summum Bonum of human life and the future destiny of the human soul after death as represented in the *Gītā* has a very close resemblance with the finest and loftiest utterances of the Upanisads on the same subjects, and the conclusion seems to be irresistible that they spring from the same root, same soil and same atmosphere of religious and philosophical thought.

### (i) *Heaven and Hell*

184 The word "Svarga" or "Heaven" meets us in the following verses —

'Fortunate are the Ksattriyas who obtain such a

fight, offered unsought as an open door to heaven' (G. II. 32). "Slain, thou wilt obtain heaven" (G. II. 37). Those whose very self is desire, and who act with a view to win heaven" etc. (G. II. 43). But the conception of heaven is made clear in G. IX. 20-21, which tell us that "the knower of the three Vedas, the 'soma'-drinking, those who are purified from sin, worshipping God with sacrifice, pray of Him the way to Heaven they ascending to the holy world of the Ruler of the gods, eat in heaven the divine feasts of gods, they having enjoyed the spacious heaven-world, their holiness withered, come back to this world of death. Following the virtues enjoined by the three Vedas, desiring desires, they come and go". It will be seen that during the period when these lines of the Gītā were composed, the Ksattriya heroes who fell in the battle-field, as well as house-holders performing sacrifices were believed to have deserved seats in the heaven where they were supposed to enjoy the company of gods only for a short time, as at the expiration of the term of their merits they had to return to the mortal earth again.

185. Again, the belief in a hell where the vicious people are condemned to go and to which those ancestors whose descendants do not offer libations to them were supposed to be degraded, is evident in the following verses.—"The confusion of caste drags to hell the slayers of the family and the family, for their ancestors fall, deprived of rice-balls and libations. The abode of those people whose family customs are extinguished is everlastingly in hell" (G. I. 43. 44). "Bewildered by

numerous thoughts, enmeshed in the web of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desire, they (the people of demoniacal disposition) fall downwards into a foul hell (G. XVI 16). Cast into demoniacal wombs, deluded birth after birth without attaining God, they go to the lower world (i.e. hell) Triple is the gate of this hell, destructive of the self,—lust, wrath, and greed". (G. XVI 20-21).

186 Besides these worlds of heaven and hell, the Gītā also refers to the worlds of gods, of pitrs, or ancestors, and the region of Elements, as opposed to the abode of the Supreme Being, in the verse IX 25, according to which "they who worship the shining ones (gods) go to the shining ones, the ancestor-worshippers go to the world of Manes, those who sacrifice go to the Elements, but the worshippers of God go to God Himself" We meet with the same idea in such terms as "the world of the pious or virtuous" in the verses G. VI. 41, G XIV 14 and G XVIII 71.

(ii) *Future Life conceived as a Cycle of Rebirths.*  
 (Transmigration or Annihilation )

187 Faith in the transmigration of the Soul has been a common heritage of the Indian civilisation, which can be traced back to the Vedic period The Gītā has furnished us with a poetico-philosophical representation of this conception through fine analogies and metaphors which are peculiarly our Poet's own and which have hardly been excelled by any subsequent author in the history of the world-literature For example, we may quote the following verses,—"As the

dweller in the body experienceth in the body, childhood, youth and old age, so passeth the soul to another body" (G. II. 13). "As a man casting off worn-out garments taketh new ones, so doth the dweller in the body casting off worn-out bodies enter into others that are new" (G. II. 22). "For, certain is death to the born and certain is birth for the dead" (G. II. 27). Even the unsuccessful Yogis are not free from rebirth, e.g. "Having attained to the worlds of the pure-doing and having dwelt there for immemorial years, he who fell from Yoga is reborn in a pure and blessed house. Or he may be born into a family of wise Yogi, but such a birth as that is most difficult to obtain in this world. But the Yogi labouring with assiduity, purified from sin, fully perfected through manifold births, reacheth the Supreme Goal" (G. VI. 41, 42, 45). That rebirth is due to the fruit of man's action in this life is stated in the following passages.—"They (sacrificers according to the Vedas) act with a view to ends which offer birth as the fruits of actions (G. II. 43). Spirit, seated in matter, uses the *gunas*, born of matter, attachment to the "qualities" is the cause of his birth in good and evil wombs. He who thus knoweth Spirit and Matter with its qualities, in whatsoever condition he may be, he shall not be born again (G. XIII. 22-24). After many births the wise man cometh unto God (G. VII. 19). Having come to God these Mahātmās (great-souled men) are subjected to rebirth, which is the abode of pain and non-eternal (G. VIII. 15). Again G. IX. 20-21 (quoted above) show that even the performers of meritorious deeds who go there are not freed from re-birth. As con-

trasted to these, the wise who take refuge in the Divine Philosophy and are assimilated to the Divine Nature are not reborn even in the emanation of the universe, nor are they disquieted in dissolution (G. XIV. 2). So also in G XV. 4, the knower of the world as an Aśvattha tree is said to reach that path beyond, treading which there is no return. The fate of the vicious and immoral persons is described in awful terms in G XVI 19-20 as follows.—‘These haters, evil, pitiless, vilest among men in the world, I ever throw down into demoniacal wombs. Cast into demoniacal wombs, deluded birth after birth, attaining not to Me, O Kaunteya, they sink into the lowest depths.’ Even the paths which lead to rebirth and freedom from the cycle of births are definitely laid down and strangely enough, these paths were believed to be dependent on the time when the soul departed from the body, as is also conceived in the Chhāndogya and other Upanisads ‘That time, wherein going forth, Yogis return not, and also that wherein going forth they return, that time shall I declare to thee, O Prince of the Bhāratas. Fire, light, daytime, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern path—thence going forth, the men who know the Eternal go to the Eternal. Smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight, also the six months of the southern path—thence the Yogi, obtaining the moonlight, returneth. Light and darkness, these are thought to be the world’s ever-lasting paths, by the one he goeth who returneth not, by the other he who returneth again.’

188 Again, the form in which the soul leaves the body at death and the elements which accom~~v~~<sup>v</sup> it upto

another birth are also explicitly stated in the verses (G. XV. 7-10) which are quoted by the philosophical systems as authoritative on this subject. "A portion of Mine Own Self, transformed in the world of life into an immortal spirit, draweth round itself the senses, of which the mind is the sixth, veiled in matter. When the lord (i.e., soul) acquireth a body and when he abandoneth it, he seizeth these and goeth with them, as the wind takes fragrances from their retreats. Enshrined in the ear, the eye, the touch, the taste and the smell, and in the mind also, he enjoyeth the objects of the senses. The deluded do not perceive him when he departeth or stayeth, or enjoyeth, swayed by the qualities; the wisdom-eyed perceive". Again the state of rebirth also depends on the prevalence of the one or the other *gunas* at the time of death (e.g. G XIV. 15) "Having gone dissolution in Rajas (Motion), he is born among those attached to action; if dissolved in Tamas (Inertia), he is born in the wombs of the senseless". This conception of rebirth applies not only to individual souls of men, but to all beings in the universe, and thus it becomes a cosmic principle underlying creation and dissolution of the universe at the beginning and end of the world-age (G. IX. 7-8). What is more, even God Himself assumes birth after birth in human forms in order to save the world from unrighteousness, as indicated by the verses G. IV. 5-9

On the other extreme of rebirth, we have the conception of total annihilation or absolute destruction for the wicked men, a conception that meets us in the following

verses of the Gītā IV 40 (*Vinaśyati*)<sup>\*</sup>, V 12, IX 31 (my devotee never perishes, XVIII 5-8 (thou shalt be utterly destroyed).

(iii) *Conceptions of the Highest Good*

188 Apart from the popular motives of prospective rewards in the heaven and suffering punishment in the Hell, the Poet of the Gītā has offered us with purer and nobler motives of acting with a view to achieve the highest good for the human soul. This supreme end of all our actions, the final goal of our spiritual culture, or what is called the Summum Bonum of our life has been represented by the Gītā in various forms which may be classified under the following heads —

(a) *Immortality and Freedom from the Bondage of births and of actions*

189 As opposed to the series of rebirths or utter annihilation, to which the sceptics, the atheists and the evildoers are subjected, the righteous, the sages, and the devotees are promised an eternal life, free from the fetters of births and activities in this or any other world. This end is explicitly upheld in the verses, G. XII 15, XIII 13, e.g. "He from whom the world doth not shrink away, who doth not shrink away from the world, freed from the agitations of joy, anger and fear, he is dear to Me," "I will declare that which ought to be known, that which being known immortality is enjoyed."

\* The word "*Vinaśyati*" might not have been used in the sense of annihilation (vide the commentaries & compare also '*Vinastā bā pīnastā bā mitī lā janakātmajā*' (Sundarakanda, Rāmayana, XIII 17) — (Note by Prof. M C Ghosh)

But there are a considerably large number of verses in which the same truth is conveyed indirectly and implicitly through such phrases as crossing the ocean of sin or crossing the borders of *Gunas* or *Māyā* or going beyond the world of changes and mutations e.g. "Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet shall thou cross over all sin by the raft of wisdom (G. IV. 36) "This divine illusion of Mine, caused by the 'qualities' is hard to pierce, they who come to Me, they cross over this illusion" (G. VII. 14) "He who knoweth me, unborn, beginningless, the great Lord of the world among mortals without delusion, is liberated from all sin", (G. X. 3). "These I speedily lift up from the ocean of death and existence, O Pārtha, their minds being fixed on Me" (G. XII. 7). "Others also, ignorant of this, having heard of it from others, worship, and these also cross beyond death, adhering to what they had heard" (G. XIII. 26). "The same in honour and ignominy, the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings—he is said to have crossed over the qualities. And he who serveth Me exclusively by the Yoga of devotion, crossing beyond the qualities, he is fit to become the Eternal" (G. XIV. 25–26). "Thinking on Me, thou shalt overcome all obstacles by My grace, but if from egoism thou wilt not listen, thou shalt be destroyed utterly. Abandoning all duties come unto Me alone for shelter, sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins" (G. XVIII. 58, 66)

190. The ideal of Immortality in the form of freedom from the bondage of birth is also expressed in the following verses—"The Sages, united to the Pure Rea-

son renounce the fruit which action yieldeth, and liberated from the bonds of birth, they go to the blissful seat" (G II 51). "He should be known as a perpetual ascetic, who neither hateth nor desireth, free from the pairs of opposites, O Mighty-Armed, he is easily set free from bondage" (G V 3). "The Yogi who thus, ever harmonising the self, hath put away sin he easily enjoyeth the infinite bliss of contact with the Eternal" (G VI 28) "They who, refuge in Me, strive for liberation from birth and death, they know the Eternal, the whole Self-knowledge and all action" (G VII. 29). "Having come to Me, these Mahátmás come not again to birth, the place of pain, non-eternal, they have gone to the highest bliss" "That unmanifested, "the Indestructible" It is called. It is named the highest Path. They who reach It return not That is My supreme abode" (G. VIII 15, 31) "When the dweller in the body hath crossed over these three qualities, where all bodies have been produced, liberated from birth, death, old age and sorrow, he drinketh the nectar of immortality" (G. XIV. 20). "With the pronunciation of "Tat" and without aiming at fruit are performed the various acts of sacrifice, austerity and gift, by those desiring liberation."

(G. XVII 25) As the bondage of birth is due to the fetters of actions, it is natural that the goal of Immortality should be set before us in the form of freedom from the fetters of action e.g. "The world is bound by action, unless performed for the sake of sacrifice, for that sake, free from attachment, perform thy action" (G. IV 9; also cf G. III. 4, 13). "Nor does action affect Me, nor is

the fruit of action desired by Me He who thus knoweth Me is not bound by actions" (G IV. 14) "What is action, what inaction?" even the wise are herein perplexed Therefore I will declare to thee the action by knowing which thou shalt be loosed from evil" "Of one with attachment dead, harmonious, with his thoughts established in wisdom, his works sacrifices, all action melts away" "Better than the sacrifice of any objects is the sacrifice of wisdom, O Parantapa All actions in their entirety, O Pātha, culminate in wisdom" (G IV 16, 23, 33) "Thus shalt thou be liberated from the bonds of action, yielding good and evil fruits, thyself harmonised by the yoga of renunciation, thou shalt come unto Me when set free" (G IX. 28) "Harmony, Motion, Inertia, such are the qualities, Matter-born, they bind fast in the body, O great-armed one, the indestructible dweller in the body" (G XIV 5) "The divine properties are deemed to be for liberation, the demoniacal for bondage Grieve not, thou art born with divine properties, O Pāndava" (G XVI 5) "The man also who, full of faith, merely heareth it unreviling, even he, freed from evil, obtaineth the radiant worlds of the righteous." (G XVIII 71 Also cf G XVIII, 54, 62—"neither grieves nor desires' )

### (b) PEACE, JOY, AND PERFECTION

191 Besides the negative conception of the Supreme and as mere freedom from death and births and actions, as represented in the preceding section, there is a positive and more concrete view of the same expressed in

such terms as Śānti (Peace), Sukha (Bliss) or Ānanda (Joy) and Siddhi (Perfection) e g , (1) Peace—"There is no Pure Reason for the non-harmonised, nor for the non-harmonised is there concentration, for him without concentration there is no peace and for the unpeaceful how can there be happiness?" (G. II 66) "He attaineth Peace, into whom all desires flow as rivers flow into the ocean, which is filled with water, but remaineth unmoved, not he who desireth desires" "Whoso forsaketh all desires and goeth onwards free from yearnings, self-less and without egoism—he goeth to Peace" (G II 70, 71) "The man who is full of faith obtaineth wisdom, and he also who hath mastery over his senses , and having obtained wisdom, he goeth swiftly to the supreme Peace" (G IV 39) "The harmonised man, having abandoned the fruit of action, attaineth to the eternal Peace, the non-harmonised, impelled by desire attached to fruit, are bound" "Having known Me, as the Enjoyer of sacrifice and of austerity, the mighty Ruler of all the worlds and the Lover of all beings, he goeth to Peace" (G V. 22, 29) "The Yogi, ever united thus with the Self, with the mind controlled, goeth to Peace,\* to the supreme Bliss that abideth in Me" (G VI 15) "Speedily he becometh dutiful and goeth to eternal peace, O Kaunteya, know thou for certain that My devotee perisheth never" (G IX 31) "Better indeed is wisdom than constant practice, than wisdom meditation is better."

---

\* 'Nirvāna' is not extinction in the Buddhistic sense.

than meditation, renunciation of the fruit of action, on renunciation follows peace" (G. XII. 12).

(ii) Happiness.—

"For the unpeaceful how can there be happiness?" (G II 66) "He whose self is unattached to external contacts and findeth joy in the Self, having the self harmonised with the eternal by yoga, enjoys imperishable bliss" (G V 21) "He who is able to endure here on earth ere he be liberated from the body, the force born from desire and passion, he is harmonised, he is a happy man "He who is happy within, who rejoiceth within, who is illuminated within, that Yogi, becoming the Eternal, goeth to the Peace of the Eternal". "The Peace of the Eternal lies near to those who know themselves, who are disjoined from desire and passion, subdued in nature, of subdued thoughts" (G V 23, 24, 26) "That in which he findeth the supreme delight which the Reason can grasp beyond the senses, wherein established he moveth not from the Reality, which, having obtained, he thinketh there is no greater gain beyond it, wherein established, he is not shaken even by heavy sorrow" "Supreme joy is for this Yogi whose mind is peaceful, whose passion-nature is calmed, who is sinless and of the nature of the Eternal "The Yogi who thus, ever harmonising the self, hath put away sin, he easily enjoyeth the infinite bliss of contact with the Eternal (G VI 21, 22, 27, 28) "For I am the abode of the Eternal, and of the indestructible nectar of immortality, of immemorial righteousness, and of unending bliss" (G. XIV. 27). "He who having cast aside

the ordinances of the Scriptures, followeth the promptings of desire, attaineth not to perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest goal." (G XVI. 23). (iii) Perfection (Siddhi). "Man winneth not freedom from action by abstaining from activity, nor by mere renunciation doth he rise to perfection" "Janaka and others indeed attained to perfection by action." (G. III 4. 20). "They who long after success in action on earth worship the Shining Ones, for in brief space verily, in this world of men, success is born of action" (G. IV 12) "Having come to Me, these Mahātmās come not again to birth, the place of pain, non-eternal they have gone to the highest bliss." (G. VIII 15) "If also thou art not equal to constant practice, be intent on My service, performing actions for My sake, thou shalt attain perfection" (G XII. 10). "I will again proclaim that supreme Wisdom, of all wisdom the best, which having known, all the Sages have gone hence to supreme perfection" (G XIV. 1) "He who having cast aside the ordinances of the scriptures, followeth the desire, attaineth not to perfection" (G XVI 23) "Man reacheth perfection by each being intent on his own duty, listen thou how perfection is won by him who is intent on his own duty. "He from whom is the emanation of beings, by whom all this is pervaded, by worshipping Him in his own duty a man winneth perfection How one having attained perfection obtaineth the Eternal, that highest state of wisdom learn thou from Me only succinctly, O Kaunteya" (G. XVIII. 45, 46, 50)

(c) THE HIGHEST GOAL AS THE SUPREME PATH  
AND ETERNAL ABODE

192 The mysterious and indefinable character of the ideal of human endeavours is indicated by the Poet's employment of such vague and obscure phrases as *paramśīeyah*, *paramāgati*, *śāśwatam padam* or *sthānam parāgati*, *ādyam paramam sthānam*, *avyayam padam* etc., as contrasted with *anuttamā gati*, *adhamā gati*—(e.g G III 11, V. 2, VI 45, VIII 13, 21, 28, IX 32, XVIII 29, XVI 22, 23, III 3, XV 3, 5, XVIII 56, 62, VII 18, XVI 20)—meaning the supreme good, highest path or destination, the foremost place or position, the eternal or imperishable goal etc for the righteous and the worst path or the evil way for the wrongdoers

(d) Attainment of the Supreme Being,—as (i) Everlasting Union with the Divine Self and Participation in Divine Life, and (ii) as Unity with Brahman—Absorption in the Absolute (or Nirvāna)

193 The religious view of the Supreme Good has been represented in its (i) theistic as well as (ii) pantheistic aspect respectively in the following verses—

(i) III 19, VIII 8, 10, XIII 35 *Paramam puruṣam divyam*, IV 9, 10, VI 31, VII 19, VIII 5, 21, IX 28, 34, XI. 55, XII 4, 8, 9, XIII 1, 9, *māmeti*, *madbhāvameti*, IV. 2, 19, *Sādharmya*, XV 6, XVIII 65, 68, *Paramam Dhāma mama*, X 9, 10 (*yoga*), XI 52 seeing the form of God, VII 17, XII 13-20, XVIII 69 being the beloved of God (ii) *Brahmi stuti*, *Brahma nirvāna*, II 72, IV 24, 31, V 6, 19, 24-26, VI 15, 27,

28 ; VIII. 24-26 ; (rising above Śavda Brahma VI. 44) ; XIII. 31 ; XIV. 26, 27 ; XVIII. 50, 53, 54.

194. Now anyone acquainted with the literature of the earlier Upanisads will discover at a glance the underlying unity of thought and even similarity of expression between the speculations of the Gītā concerning the future life and the Sumnum Bonum and those of the Upanisads I shall not enter into the details of the Upanisadic conception of the immortality of the soul and its destiny beyond the earthly life of three score years and ten, but content myself with the quotation of a few verses from the Katha Upanisad, which is regarded by Max Muller to be older than Buddha (*Anthropological Religion*, P. 345) and which professes to solve the deepest mysteries about the hereafter and thus conveys to us the fruits of the boldest speculations of the Rsis of the Upanisads in their attempt to penetrate into the innermost region of truths that can be sought or understood by men

195 As regards the mystery of what happens to the Self after reaching death, the Katha Upanisad tells us—\* “Some enter the womb in order to have a body, as organic beings, others go into inorganic matter, according to their work and according to their knowledge”—which

\* Katha Up II 2 2 6 V 6 The verses 5-7 seem to be an interpolation, because—

- (i) The subject and nature of these verses are different from those of the verses 4 & 8
- (ii) The idea of transmigration is quite foreign here.  
(Note from Prof. M. C. Ghosh).

implies a belief in the theory of rebirth and the doctrine of Karma. "The knower of the highest Brahman attains the fulfilment of all desires (K. I. 2. 16), is magnified in the world of Brahman (K. I. 2. 17); the wise, knowing God, leave joy and sorrow far behind (K. I. 12), do not grieve (K. I. 2. 22), rejoice at obtaining what is worth rejoicing (K. I. 2. 13), reach that place whence they are not born again (K. I. 3, 8) and attain the highest abode of Visnu,—the end of the life's journey" (K. I. 3, 9), "Beyond the Supreme Person, there is nothing, that is the goal, the highest road" (K. I. 3, 11); knowing the Infinite one is freed from the jaws of death" (K. I. 3, 15); "he who approaches Brahman, is liberated and becomes free" (K. II. 1, 1), Brahman is called the immortal, (K. II. 1, 2, and II. 2, 8), the wise knowing the one all-pervading spirit within their self obtain eternal happiness and eternal peace (K. II. 2, 13), saying "This is that," they realise the highest indescribable pleasure (K. II. 2, 14), those who know Brahman become immortal (K. II. 2, 3, 8); if a man cannot understand this Brahman before his body is cast aside, then he has to take body again in the world of creation (K. II. 3, 4), knowing the Supreme Person, a creature is liberated and attains immortality (K. II. 3, 8); when all desires that dwell in his heart cease then the mortal becomes immortal and obtains Brahman, (K. II. 3, 14), when all the ties of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal (K. II. 3, 15). Then again in the verses II. 3, 16, 17 of the last chapter of this Upanisad, we meet a physiological condition of the immortality of the soul. These fine passages of

the Katha Upanisad in which Yama, the Lord of Death, is said to convey to Nachiketa, an earnest seeker after truth, the subtle and mysterious secrets concerning what happens to men after death, may be taken to be the authoritative and representative views of that age on the subject, and the marked resemblance of thought and expression between the Katha Upanisad and the Gītā in the most essential points of the doctrines of the future life and the final destiny of the soul, ought to convince us of the fact that they belonged to the same school of thought and were products of the same social and intellectual environments. For we find in the Kaṭha Upanisad as in the Gītā the absence of any elaborate doctrine of the future state of our ~~soul~~<sup>self</sup> after our bodily death, and of any vivid description of the heaven and the hell or any other supernatural region, through which the soul must pass before it is delivered from the bondage of births and rebirths ~~or~~<sup>and</sup> united with God. There is only one verse out of 10 verses in the Kaṭha Upanisad which explicitly states the condition of future life, as conceived by its author viz. II. 2, 7 (quoted above), although the immortal life is held up in many verses as the goal of moral and religious doctrines. Similarly in the Katha Upaniṣad as in the Gītā there is no definite and concrete picture, but we find only vague and general ideas, representing the final state of the liberated souls, conveyed in the following passages, viz., where the ~~souls~~<sup>seers</sup> are said to be "free from rebirth", "free from ~~desire~~<sup>desires</sup>", "free from grief", "beyond joy and sorrow", ~~and~~<sup>and</sup> eternal peace and eternal happiness, realising ~~the~~<sup>the</sup>

indescribable pleasure etc. They are said to have the fulfilment of all desires so that all hankerings in their minds cease and all the ties of their heart are severed. They are said to be glorious in the world of Brahman, to attain the highest abode of Visnu and to obtain Brahma. Thus whether we look at the conception of the future life or at that of the *Summum Bonum*, the *Gītā* bears in its pages unmistakable signs of the Upanisadic character of its teachings and unquestionable evidences of its belonging to the pre-systematic period of the Indian philosophical speculation.

---

## SECTION XII

### CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER III.

(a) *Use of the terms Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta in the Gītā.*

196. The intellectual out-look and philosophical equipment of the poet has been clearly manifested in the various chapters and verses of the *Gīta*, dealing with the concept of knowledge and its analysis into various elements, the concept of the soul and its relation to the body, the doctrines of pre-existence, and rebirth, the concepts of the relation of the Soul to Matter, of the Soul to God, as we have seen in sections I-IV of this chapter.

Again, the Poet has evinced acute philosophical reasoning and insight in discussing, through this dialogue between Krsna and Arjuna, the philosophical and metaphysical truths concerning the genesis of desires and passions, of lust and anger that overpower the good sense and judgement of the agent or author of action, as well as in his treatment of the problems of the origin, evolution and dissolution of the world-process, the relation of the world of appearances to the unmanifest Brahma or the Absolute, the doctrine of three Gunas or 'trinity' of elements in matter (*Satta, rajas and tamas*) pervading the whole creation, and also in his exposition of the nature of God, the varieties of His manifestations, gradations in His Nature, and His relation to the world and the Soul, as we have seen in sections V to X of this chapter. The views of the Poet on the *Summum bonum* and future life, as put in the mouth of Krsna, lead us however to think that he was not a philosopher disciplined in the school of a system of philosophy, as his references to Heaven and Hell, and cycles of rebirth, do not exactly fit in with His conception of the Highest Good, and as there is no clear enunciation of his idea of the salvation and final state of the soul after death in the *Gītā*, except the use of such terms as connote peace, joy, perfection, highest goal, the supreme path, eternal abode, attainment of the Supreme Being, everlasting union with the Divine Self, participation in Divine Life, Absorption in the Absolute ('*Nirvāna*') etc.

197. That the *Gītā* was composed at a time when systems of philosophy, as we know them today, were not

yet developed, will be apparent when we discover that the terms 'Sāṅkhya', 'Yoga', 'Vedānta' etc., are used in the Gītā in different senses and do not at all convey the meanings that are assigned to these words in systems of philosophy known under these names. We have already discussed this matter in our book "Bhagavad Gītā and Modern Scholarship". Suffice it to mention that the disciplines known as 'Sāṅkhya' and 'Yoga' are conceived by the author of the Gītā as really one, though he admits that the ignorant and the childish view of these modes of discipline separates them and treats them as opposed to each other. According to the Gītā, both of them lead to the same goal, one (i.e., 'Sāṅkhya') being the way of reflection meant for the wise, who are trained in the habit of discriminating and reasoning about things, and the other (i.e., 'Yoga') being the way of action based on concentration and devotion and disinterested performance of duty, in obedience to the will of God or in a spirit of resignation or surrender of the individual self to the Universal Self (vide G III 3, G V. 4-5 etc.). It will be seen that there is no distinction made in the Gītā between a theistic Sāṅkhya (or Yoga) and an atheistic Sāṅkhya (Sāṅkhya proper), as we find in the traditional schools of philosophy so named. What is strange, certain principles (i.e., fivefold causes of things) are said to be taught in the Sāṅkhya Ethics (Kṛtaṇta as distinguished from Vedānta or Metaphysics evidently), although no such doctrine is found in the extant literature of the Sāṅkhya philosophy (vide G XVIII 13-14). In G. XIII. 24, meditation (*Dhyāna*), reflection (*Sān-*

*ākhyā*) concentration (*Yoga*) and disinterested duty (*Karma Yoga*) are said to be different modes of seeing the self by the self in the self.

Similarly, the term Brahma stands for the highest concept of the Absolute, impersonal and unmanifest, as well as for Personal God in the Gita, and there are also verses in which 'Brahma' connotes sacrifice, as well as Matter or *Prakrti*, when the word is qualified by the adjective 'Mahat' or great e.g., 'Mahat-Brahma' is said to be the mother-aspect, which receives the creative seed from God as Father, whence creation evolves (vide G. XIV. 3-4).

Again Krsna is referred to as '*Vedāntakṛt*' as well as '*Vedāvit*' (the author of the Vedānta and Knower of the Veda), and certain doctrines taught by Krsna are said to have been sung by 'Rsis' (sages) in various metrical compositions as well as expounded in the 'Brahma-sūtras' with convincing arguments and reasonings (vide G. XV 15, G. XIII. 4)

These words *Vedānta* and *Brahmasutra* do not seem to refer to the system of philosophy known as Vedanta and associated with Rsi 'Bádaráyana' or Krsna Dwaipáyana, supposed to be the author of Brahmasutras, on which Śankara, Mādhva, Rāmānuja and others wrote valuable commentaries

It is now recognised by most Indologists that the word 'Vedānta' in Hindu Thought (like Metaphysics of Aristotle) originally meant the '*anta*' or conclusion of the Vedas Literally, of course the oldest Upanisads are appended to the Vedic texts, and coming as they do after

hymns ('mātras), or Samhitā portion and the Brāhmaṇas or the ritualist treatises, the Upaniṣads may rightly be regarded as the end of the Vedas (Veda-anta=Vedānta). But ontologically, Upaniṣads are Vedāntas in the sense of being the culmination or the consummation of the Vedic religion, as the last or best fruit or the highest phase of Vedic culture and as the essence of Vedic literature. This does not however mean that all the Upaniṣads are later than the hymns or the rituals of the Vedic literature in their origin, as it is possible that some of the oldest Upaniṣads contain revelations and intuitions of truth which are not later than the hymns composed by the Vedic R̥sis. The use of the term Vedānta in the Gītā therefore does not by itself prove that our poem is of later origin than the system of philosophy known as Vedānta. We have held the view that the Gītā having long been recognised as one of the three 'Prasthānas' of the Vedānta Philosophy, the Upaniṣads form the first stage, the Gītā the second stage, and the Brahma-Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa the third or last stage of the history of development of the Vedānta system. We have also maintained that the Gītā was the first systematic attempt at a synthesis of the Upaniṣadic seers (R̥sis), although it was a poetic synthesis based on intuition unlike the later rational and philosophical synthesis of the scriptural utterances or revelation ('Sruti') in the system of the Vedāntic sūtras based on reasoning.

198. Similarly, the word 'Brahma-sūtras' in the Gītā has been interpreted by classical commentators as standing for the Upaniṣads. And yet it is strange that an ortho-

dox scholar like B G Tilak, while following the traditional interpretation of the *Gītā* as a rule, has thought fit to take the term 'Brahma-sutra' in the fourth verse of G. XIII to mean the system of Vedānta Philosophy represented by the *sutras* of Bādarāyana. He has thereby subjected himself to an inconsistency and also placed himself under a necessity to try and invent absurd fanciful theories in order to disentangle himself from this self-imposed contradiction. He admits that the *Gītā* is earlier than the Brahmasūtras of Bādarāyana, as the verses of the *Gītā* are referred to and are quoted as authority for certain doctrines in the Brahmasūtras under the aphorisms "Smrteścha", according to the old commentators. And yet the occurrence of the word "Brahmasūtras" in the *Gītā*, which Tilak identifies with the sūtras of the Vedānta school so named, would seem to indicate that the author of the *Gītā* knew the Vedānta Sūtras, which therefore, must have preceded the *Gītā*. Tilak puts this dilemma before the readers of his '*Gītā-Rahasya*' and offers a solution which would cast reflection on the honesty of the great Vyāsa, supposed to be the Encyclopaedic author of the Purānas and the Epic Mahābhārata and the *Gītā* and the Brahmasūtras. According to Tilak the *Gītā* was originally written before the Brahmasūtras, but after the composition of the Brahmasūtras, Vyāsa wanted to raise the status of his new work as an authoritative text on philosophy and with this object in view, while revising the Epic Mahābhārata, he inserted the fourth verse in Chapter XIII of the *Gītā*. According to this view of Tilak, a reference made to the Brahma-

sūtras in the Gītā, which had already attained fame and popularity, helped in the acceptance of this new work 'Brahmasūtras' by the learned society of those days as a standard work in philosophy of the Vedānta school. But for his vast erudation and argumentative power for which Mr. Tilak had undoubted reputation, none would have taken his uncalled-for theory of revision of the Epic and insertion of a new verse in the Gītā seriously. The mere insertion of the word 'Brahmasutra' in the Gītā does little to enhance the value of the Vedānta-Sūtras, which can naturally stand on its own intrinsic merits. The Rsis and authors of the reputation of Vyāsa (or whoever may have been author of the Brahmasūtra) do not need such external props to support their position of authority, and they were incapable of confounding the posterity by a puzzling cross-reference which agitates the minds of modern scholars even up to this day and raises such relevant questions as to whether the Gītā refers to the Sūtras or the Vedanta-Sūtras refer to the Gītā and as to which of these works was earlier. Tilak could not ignore the fact that the term 'Brahmasūtra' in the Gītā (Chapter XIII) has been explained by all orthodox commentators in the sense of the Upanisads as the Upanisads do really string together like a thread (*sūtra*) revealed truths or utterances of the Rsis of old concerning the nature and attributes of Brahma. It is therefore unnecessary to resort to a gratuitous hypothesis like Tilak's for the solution of a problem which does not arise except in the fertile brains of sophistical interpreters. We thus conclude that the terms Sāṅkhya, Yoga,

Vedānta and Brahmasūtras are used in the Gītā in quite different senses from those accepted in the Schools of philosophy known as Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta, and that the Gītā belongs to the pre-systematic period of Indian philosophy and its poet was more a Prophet-sage or a Rsi, than a philosopher of the schools

(b) *The Vedas, the Upanisads and the Gītā*

199 We have seen that the attitude of the author of the Gītā towards the Vedas is one of indifference or protest so far as ritualism and ceremonialism was concerned, and he asserted that for the wise who knew Brahma, the Vedas are as unnecessary as the water of a pool when the whole country is overflooded And yet the Gītā does not throw the Vedas overboard, but enjoins the regular study of scriptures as a divine quality or virtue and accepts the popular view that performance of sacrifices, as laid down in the Vedas, leads the religious observer to heaven, but these heavenly pleasures are only transient and the agent has to come down to earth on the expiry of the term of his meritorious deeds The poet of the Gītā seems to have been a Reformer and yet he was conservative enough not to desire to bring about reforms by revolution There is however one significant omission and one equally significant assertion in the Gītā which may throw some light on the poet and his age The three Vedas (*Trioyu Vidyā*) are mentioned or hinted in several places of the Gītā, but the Atharva or the Fourth Veda is never mentioned by name nor even implied in any of the verses of the Gītā, while the Sāma Veda is said to be the best among the Vedas, as representing a Divine essence or

*Bibhuti* (vide G. X 22). Evidently the poet of the *Gītā* belongs to the age when the *Sāma Veda* had attained prominence in the Vedic hierarchy as an authoritative scripture in the contemporary society. This may be taken as another proof of the antiquity of the *Gītā*.

200. As hinted in the "Bhagavad *Gītā* and Modern Scholarship", the association of the poet of the *Gītā* with the *Sāma Veda* school seems to point to an important conclusion, viz, the connection or identification of the Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, (*Devakiputro*) of Chhāndogya Upanisad (III, 17) with Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the *Gītā* and founder of the Bhāgavata religion Dr Hem Chandra Roy Choudhury has tried to trace the early history of Vaiśnāvism from the spiritualistic-idealistic doctrine contained in the Chāndogya Upanisad (Ch III 17), where Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, is said to have been initiated by Rsi *Ghora*, son of Angiras, into certain mysteries of a spiritual religion As in the *Gītā* so in these passages of the Chhāndogya Upanisad the concept of sacrifice is given a symbolical interpretation and associated with the discipline of the inner life,—austere penances, charity, uprightness, non-violence and speaking of truth being regarded as fees offered by the pupil to the preceptor We shall discuss the implications of this connection between the Chhāndogya Upanisad of the *Sāma Veda* school and the view of the *Gītā* upholding the *Sāma Veda* as the best and highest among the Vedas or as the Divine essence, when we deal with the philosophy and religion of the *Gītā* in a separate volume. Here it is enough to point out that the religion and philosophy of the *Gītā* is a

natural development and a culmination of the thoughts of the Upanisads, specially of Isā, Katha, Kena, Chhāndogya and Brhadāranyaka Upanisads, and this view will show the untenability of the position of Garbe and other scholars who identify the Gītā with the Sāṅkhya school of philosophy and consider the Vedantic elements in the Gītā as later interpolations.

201. The Gītā, like many other episodes of the Epic Mahābhārata, belongs to an age when systematic philosophy as we know it from the six schools of Hindu thought, had not yet been developed, but philosophical concepts and ideas were floating in the atmosphere as loose fragments waiting to be strung together in chains of reasoning by later system-builders and their schools in the form of sūtras. Professor Deussen has rightly characterised the thoughts of the Epic age under the name of "Übergangs Philosophie" or transitional philosophy. The Gītā forms the central Apex, as it were, in this period of transition between the Upanisadic thoughts and the thoughts of the systematic philosophers of the schools. The author of this "Divine Song" had the gift of poetic intuition combined with philosophical insight that enabled him to bring into a synthesis the scattered fragments of philosophical ideas in the atmosphere of the Upanisadic and the Epic age.

202. Reference to Sāma Veda in the Gītā as the highest among the Vedas seems to indicate a special affinity between the Gītā and the Upanisads of the Sāma Veda school i.e., Kena Upanisad and Chhāndogya Upanisad, and we shall see that the concepts of the Gītā on God and

His relation to the Universe of Nature and Mind lend themselves to be derived from or identified with those found in these Upanisads of the Sāma Veda school, although our Poet was also familiar with such Upanisads of the other Vedic schools as the Katha, Śvetāśvatara and the Mundaka Upanisads.

(c) REFERENCE TO THE PURANIC MYTHS  
AND LEGENDS

203. The poet of the Gīā was not only familiar with the three Vedas and the oldest Upanisads and the concepts of Sāiikhya, Yoga Vedānta and other philosophical ideas prevalent in his times, but he also equipped himself with a study of the Epic and Purānic literature, which widened his outlook and raised him to the status of a Master-poet. His Song Celestial is a store-house of allusions, mythical and legendary references, similes and metaphors which are collected and put together in condensed forms with a rare insight which can be found only in a work of art produced by a first rate genius. I had suspected at the outset of my studies on the Gītā that the poet and his text must belong to a much later stage of the development of classical Sanskrit, when the eighteen Puranas had already been composed and the superstructure of the Epic literature was well-nigh completed. But later researches and reflections have removed this erroneous misconception with regard to the age of the Gītā and its author. In the first section of Chapter I of this book (Part I) we have already enumerated the myths and legends to which references have been made in the

Gītā (especially in the 10th and 11th chapter), but any serious student of Sanskrit dictionary (*e.g.*, Peterburgs-Worterbuch and Vedic Index) will recognise that many of the mythical allusions that meet us in the Purāṇas may be traced to the oldest Vedic literature. If there are some concepts mentioned among the manifestations of Divinity (*Bibhutis*) in the Gītā, which are not to be found in the Vedic Literature, but occur for the first time in the Purāṇic texts, this by itself does not necessarily speak against the antiquity of the Gītā, as many of the Purāṇas contain myths and legends, the germs of which belong to the earlier strata, and Purāṇic philosophy, like the Upanisadic and Epic thought, has gone through stages of development spreading over widely different periods of history.

204 It is not inconceivable that the Poet of the Gītā had known some of the mythological terms which were traditionally handed down to his generation from times immemorial and that he utilised them for enumerating the manifestations of the Infinite Divinity in the finite world, as presented in the Discourse X of the Gītā. We may not be wrong in suspecting some of these verses in the tenth Discourse as later additions interpolated by interested editors with a partisan spirit and sectarian bias. There being no logical chain or psychological association, connecting one verse with another in many parts of this dialogue, it is impossible to discern which of these verses were genuine and which might have been inserted in the later periods. Still a closer scrutiny may reveal the incongruous character of some of the verses.

example, the prayer put in the mouth of Arjuna (G X. 12-18) is not only inconsistent with the spirit of the whole dialogue, but also clashes against the sceptical attitude of Arjuna himself evidenced in the third and fourth Discourses of the *Gītā*, and even in the eleventh Discourse we find Arjuna betraying his intimacy with the human Kṛṣṇa, as a friend and companion, with whom he speaks of having walked and played, rested on the same bed, sat together and taken meals, whether alone or in the presence of other friends, without the least recognition of this friend having been an Avatāra or incarnation of God till then (G XI 41-42). Similarly, the inclusion of Vāsudeva among the Vṛṣnis and Arjuna among the Pāṇḍavas as the *Bibhutis* or manifestations of Divinity in the verse G X. 37 appears to be an anachronism, as these two heroes are supposed to be the speakers in the dialogue of the *Gītā*, and it is very unlikely that the Divinity of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna had already been recognised at the time of the battle of Kuruksetra where the message of the *Gītā* is supposed to have been delivered. It does not seem proper according to our sense of decency and decorum that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna should be deifying themselves on the eve of the terrible war, the fate of which was then hanging in the balance. Moreover, the reference to Vāsudeva and Arjuna as Divine manifestations (G X 37) has been placed rather out of context, as the proper place for mentioning these names should have been in close and contiguous relation to the other historical and mythological references given in the verses G X 25-26. On these

grounds we are inclined to believe that the verses G. X. 12-18 and G. X. 37 are sectarian interpolations made by the later Bhāgavata editors of the Epic at the time of the insertion of the Gītā-Upanisad in the revised Mahābhārata.

205. In the first chapter of the Gītā one comes across a number of names of heroes and generals, who were either relations of the Kuruites or Panduites or their friends and allies. Besides there are terms associated with the military manoeuvres and weapons in those days including names of sections and sub-sections of the army etc All these are no doubt connected with the story of the great war of Kurukṣetra related in the Epic Māhābhārata, and may be taken as evidences in favour of our hypothesis that the original Gītā-Upanisad was inserted in the body of the Mahābhārata, and appropriate modifications were made in this episode in keeping with its new Epic setting by interested Editors of the great Epic. For example, there is mention of *Vyuha* (phalanx), *chamu* (army), *Mahāratha* (a great warrior in possession of a big chariot), *Samitiñjaya* (a victor of an assembly of enemies), *Ayana* (opening in the phalanx), *Bhāga* (a Division). Similarly we meet with the names of different kinds of conch-shells blown by Kṛṣṇa and the Pāndava brothers viz., *Pāñchajanya*, *Devadatta*, *Paundra*, *Anantavijaya*, *Sughosa*, *Manipuṣṭaka* Besides the sounding of these conch-shells (*Sankha*), one reads of kettle-drums ('*Bheri*'), cymbals, trumpets, and war-horns like *Gomukha*, and other accompaniments of the military band like *Panaba*, *Ānaka* etc. If this first Discourse of the Gītā

in its entirety were originally composed by our Poet as an integral part of the Bhagavad-Gītā Upanisad, he must have been well-acquainted with the Epic literature as well as with the technical terms of the military vocabulary of that age.

206 In G IV. 1-2 we are told that Kṛṣṇa (in a previous birth of course) expounded the doctrine of Yoga to Vivasvān (the Sun-god), who in his turn taught the same to Manu, and Manu again transmitted this to Iksvāku, from whom this doctrine of Yoga was handed down to families of royal sages, after which in course of time it was lost. This succession of teachers of the science or art of Yoga reminds one of the genealogy of Rsis or seers who taught Upanisadic Brahmanīdyā, as found in various places of the old Upanisads (e.g., Mundaka Upanisad I. 1 1-2). Similar lists of the Bhāgavata teachers are given in several passages of the Nārāyanīya section of the Mahābhārata, and as we have seen in Book I of our Series, Tilak has discovered in this resemblance between the Gītā and the Nārāyanīya episode of the Epic evidences of the Bhāgavata origin of the teachings of the Gītā,—a view which we have proved to be erroneous. We shall take up this question again when we consider the views of Garbe and Tilak on the age of the Gītā in Book IV. In any case if these verses are not to be regarded as later interpolations made in the Gītā by the Vaisnava or Bhāgavata Editors of the Epic, we may presume that the author of our poem equipped himself for his task by a careful study of the history and literature of his age and especially of the Upanisadic period.

207. Similarly reference to such technical terms of philosophy and theology as *Brahma* (in a special sense), *Adhyātma*, *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidarva*, *Adhiyajña*, *Karma*, *Swabhāva* etc. in G VII 29-30 and VIII. 1-4 shows that the Poet of the *Gītā* was quite familiar with the philosophical and theological ideas of his times and made some valuable original contributions on these subjects in clarifying and expounding such concepts. These and other matters of philosophical and theological interests will be dealt with in their proper places in the subsequent volumes.

(d) *Similis and Metaphors in the Gītā*

208. Another evidence of the literary equipment of the poet of the *Gītā* is supplied by the large number of similis and metaphors in the various Discourses of the Poem, from which the following may be quoted as instances —

(1) G II 13,—where the change of bodies in various births of an individual is compared to the periods of childhood, youth and old age of human life

(2) G II 22,—where the soul's leaving one body in this life and entering into a new one in the next birth is compared to man's giving up worn-out clothes and wearing a new dress

(3) G II 58,—where the wise man withdrawing the senses from the enjoyment of sense-objects is said to be like a tortoise fully drawing in all its limbs from the outside

(4) G II 67,—where the senses of the uncontrolled are said to lead their reason astray just as the wind capsizes the boat of a careless helmsman in a river or sea.

(5) G. II. 70,—as rivers enter the sea, which is full and unmoved, so do the objects of desire enter into one who obtains peace

(6) G. III. 38-39,—as the fire is covered by smoke, as looking glass by dirt, as a foetus by the uterus, so is wisdom clouded by desire

(7) G. 19,—the work of the sage is said to be burnt by the fire of wisdom.

(8) G. IV. 36,—even the greatest sinner is said to cross the ocean of all sins through the boat or raft of wisdom

(9) G. IV. 37 As a blazing fire reduces pieces of wood to ashes, so the fire of wisdom reduces all actions to ashes (i.e., destroy their power of binding)

(10) G. IV. 42,—the sword of wisdom is to be applied for cutting off the doubt of the mind arising out of ignorance

(11) G. V. 10. As the leaf of the lotus is not affected by the water standing on it, so is the man, who does actions, offering them to Brahma and without attachment, not touched by sin

(12) VI. 29, A lamp placed in a windless spot does not flicker,—this aptly illustrates the condition of a Yogi, whose mind is kept under restraint, while practising communion with the Self

(13) G. VI. 38,—the fate of the unsuccessful probationer in *Yoga* compared to that of a piece of cloud torn asunder from the main body of clouds

(14) G. VIII. 7 All this is strung in God as gems in a thread.

(15) G. IX. 6. As the great wind, resting in ether, goes everywhere, so do things rest in God.

(16) G X. 11. God dwelling in the self dispels the darkness born of ignorance, by the shining lamp of knowledge

(17) G XI. 5-32,—the universal form of God—symbolically representing Divine life as actively manifested in the mortal happenings on the stage of the earth.

(18) G XI 28-29 As currents of a river flow into the ocean, as moths flying speedily enter into a flaming-fire, so do fighting people enter the mouth of the God of Destruction

(19) G XIII 32-33. As the all-pervading ether (or space) on account of its subtlety is not tainted, so the self though abiding in everybody is not tainted. As the one sun illuminates the whole world even so does the subject (in everybody) illuminates the whole objective world.

(20) G XV 1-3. The worldly life is compared to a banian tree (*asvatthwa*)—which can be cut down with the strong weapon of non-attachment

(21) G XV 8 The individual self, while assuming the body and passing out of it, carries the senses and the sensorium as the wind carries the scent from its source (the flower)

(22) G XVIII 48 All undertakings are covered with faults in the beginning as fire is covered with smoke.

(23) G XVIII 61 God dwells in the heart of all beings, whirling them by His *Māyā* (Divine power), as if they were mounted on a machine.

It will be seen that many of these similes and metaphors are common heritage of the poet from the Vedic

and Upanisadic culture and had passed into the general currency of the later classical Sanskrit and Epic and Puranic literature. while others were certainly products of his own original thinking and poetic genius In any case. he must have passed through a period of training in the prevalent literary works of his time and acquired the necessary skill and insight for handling the same to the best advantage and utilising the valuable elements therein as effectively as possible for the moral education of his people.

#### (e) UPANISADIC CHARACTER OF THE GITA

209. We have noted the striking points of resemblance between the religious atmosphere of the times of the *Gītā* and the condition of life and thought that prevailed in the Upanisadic age and concluded therefrom that the *Gītā* must be assigned to the Upanisadic age. and regarded as a higher development and richer unfolding of the same religio-philosophical tendencies and ethico-devotional practices that were dimly and indistinctly dawning in India during the age of the Upanisads. We have also shown that the Gita represents an earlier stage of moral and social outlook than the *Manusamhita* and adopts the same attitude towards the institutions of caste and *āśrama* (stages of life) as the older Upanisads. Like the seers of the Upanisads, the poet of the *Gītā* was more of a prophet who had vision or intuition of truths which contained the germs for the evolution of the later systems or schools of Indian philosophy. but he did not attempt at a reasoned synthesis of the philosophical concepts of Upanisads or *Vedānta*. as was

done later on by the author of the Brahma-Sutras. The Gītā may rightly be assigned therefore to the pre-systematic period of Indian philosophy as it was surely one of the best and earliest works on Universal Religion belonging to the pre-sectarian period of the Indian religious history. This subject will be more elaborately dealt with when we treat of the Philosophy and Religion of the Gītā in Volume V of our series. It will suffice to point out that the Epic Mahābhārata itself, in which the Gītā forms an episode, mentions at the end of each discourse of this episode, "Thus ends the Discourse (adhyāya) entitled so and so in the dialogue between Kīsna and Arjuna in the Yoga Śāstra (sacred science of yoga), in the Brahmanavidyā (theology relating to Brahma), in the Upaniṣad taught or sung by the most exalted and excellent Lord Divine (Sreemad-Bhagavad-Gītāsu Upaniṣadsu) etc" This alone seems to indicate that the Poet of the Epic (or the Editor thereof) regarded our text as an Upaniṣadic treatise on the science of Brahma and philosophy of Yoga—subjects which are generally dealt with in the Upaniṣadic portions of the Vedic literature. The Gītā is no doubt referred to in the Vedānta Sūtras as a *Smṛti* text and not as a *Śruti* text, evidently because it was a part of the Mahābhārata Epic and not of the Vedic Samhitā or of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas* which were considered to be *revelations* of God. But as we know, the teachings of the Gītā in matters religious and philosophical, devotional, ethical and spiritual, have been no less authoritative than those of the principal Upaniṣads among the Hindu scholars.

and thinkers even to this day, and tradition has brought down to us a verse in the praise of the Gītā which declares that all the Upanisads are like to the cows, Kṛṣṇa is the milkman, Arjuna the calf, as it were, the wise the enjoyer of milk and the Gītā is the excellent milk as sweet as nectar. This represents the true view of the relation between the Gītā and the Upaniṣads, the former being the cream or the essence of the spiritual culture represented in the latter, giving in a crystallised form the highest philosophical and religious truths experienced or intuited by the Upanisadic seers, concerning God and His relation to the world and the human life. In any case it may be taken for granted that the poet of the Gītā was well-read in the Vedic and Upaniṣadic literature of his times and was specially acquainted with the Chhāndogya and Kena Upanisads of the Sāma Veda School, with the Iśa, Kaṭha and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad of the Yajur Veda and the Mundaka Upanisad of the Atharva Veda.

210. The Gītā contains many verses which seem to be quotations from some of the metric Upanisads. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the Kaṭha Upanisad was later than the Gītā and had borrowed some verses from the latter. We are not prepared to accept this view, as the Kaṭha Upanisad seems to represent an older stratum of thought in the Indian philosophical and religious history than the Gītā which gives us more mature and complex philosophical ideas and terminology. Even if the Gītā and the Kaṭha Upanisad belonged to the same age or period of philosophical development, it would be

more in accord with facts to maintain that the verses which are common between the *Gītā* and the *Katha Upanisad* were not borrowed by their Poets, one from another, but rather utilised by them from a stock of common properties of the thought-circles of those days, i.e., taken by them from the verses which were floating from mouth to mouth, as it were,—a view which was hinted at by Max Muller and accepted by Telang and many other Orientalist scholars. Not only some of the verses but many of the ideas and concepts, symbols and allegories also were common in the intellectual and religious atmosphere of the later *Upanisads*, and it may be interesting to note the striking resemblances between good many ideas of the metrical as well as prose *Upanisads* and those of the *Gītā* and also to trace the line of development of thought from the older *Upanisads* to the time of the *Gītā*. We reserve this for discussion in Book IV of the series in a subsequent volume, wherein the Age of the *Gītā* will be discussed.

---

### SECTION XIII

#### POSITIVE RESULTS OF BOOK II

(a) The Poet of the *Gīta* and Western Thought  
(Similarities with the Conceptions of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant and others.)

211 We have made passing references to the similarities of the ethical ideals and philosophical concepts



(Para 90) We have concluded after an examination of the highest state of soul-life represented in the *Gītā* that our Poet must have combined in himself the spiritual intuition of the great seers and sages of the Upanisads, the religious ecstacies of the saints and mystics of Christendom, the ethical fervour and insight of Plato and Aristotle and pure dispassionate reasoned thinking of Spinoza and Kant, and that long before Plato and Aristotle philosophised in Greece and much earlier than the beginning of the Christian religion (Para 91). We have also mentioned at the conclusion of our study of the social environment of the poet of the *Gītā* that he had an ethical insight and genius of an Aristotle and Kant, and the philosophical talent and intellectual grasp of a Yājñaval-kyā or Socrates, combined with the religious zeal of a Buddha or Jesus and the mystic ecstasy of a Plotius or Eckhert (Para 103) The Poet's grasp of the essential characteristic of philosophical knowledge as a search for unity in the the midst of multiplicity and as an attempt to deduce the many from the one (G XIII 31 and G XVIII. 20-22) reminded us of the dialectic method of the Greek Philosopher Plato and of the epistemology of the modern philosopher Spinoza (para 116) Our survey of the classification and analysis of knowledge and the nature and contents of the highest wisdom according to the *Gītā* led us to conclude that the Poet must have lived in an environment which was rich with the height of philosophical speculations and the depth of spiritual experiences, and that he must have combined in his own disposition

the sincerity of an earnest enquirer and the soundness of a wise preceptor. We held that it was natural that a product of such an intellectual genius in such a speculative atmosphere should exhibit points of resemblance in its philosophical conceptions with the works of the greatest minds of Europe like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus, Bruno and Eckhert, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel (Para 120) Again the doctrine of Guna, as related to the dualistic principles of Purusa and Prakrti (Spirit and Prime Matter), can be interpreted in the light of Kant's critical philosophy (Para 124) We have pointed out the similarities between the *Gītāic* view of mental life as a hierarchy of physical powers or principles,—in which the higher elements dominate the lower ones and these are subordinated to the higher, and the self reigns supreme above all—and the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of the soul-life as an inner republic with reason as its sovereign (Para 130) We have also noted that the *Gītāic* conception of a gradually ascending order in mental life, of the senses, the mind, the intellect, the principle of individuality (egoism) and the self, set forth in the verses G VII, 8-9, G XV 7-10, and III 42-43, bears close resemblance to the Logos doctrine of the Neo-Platonic thinkers of the west (Para 133) It was also hinted that the division implied in the *Gītā* between a lower (or enemy) self and the higher (or friendly) self may be compared with the distinction made by Kant between the empirical ego and the noumenal ego (Para 132) We have found reasons to believe that as in the days of Socrates, so in the age of the Poet of the *Gītā*,

cosmological interests were subordinated to the ethical and religious needs of the hour (Para 135). We have also compared the world-process of the *Gītā* as represented through the concepts of a higher unmanifested and a lower unmanifested principle with the Aristotelian conceptions of the *Potential* and the *Actual* (Para 137). Again, in examining the *Gītāic* view of the nature of the world in its relation to God we made a passing remark that the ideas of the *Gītā* contained in them the germs of the same problems that occupied the thoughts of the Cartesian school of modern philosophy and culminated in the Pantheism of Spinoza and also the germs of dualism between the empirical view of the necessity and mechanism of Nature and the rationalistic conception of the noumenal world governed by freedom and teleology, as interpreted by the religious man's faith in God—a dualism that has been brought into prominence by the critical philosophy of Kant (Para 140).

The conception of the world as an *Aśvattha* Tree with roots above and branches below, as elaborated in G XV 1-4, may be compared to the Norwegian mythological conception of the tree of *Igdrasil*, which has been fully described in Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship" under his Essay on *Odin* (Para 141).

We shall discuss these in detail when we deal with the Philosophy and Religion of the *Gītā* in the fifth and sixth volumes (Books V and VI) of our Series. The teachings of the *Gītā* in the light of Modern Thought will form the subject-matter of the next volume (Book III of our Interpretations of the *Gītā*), wherein the philosophical genius

of the Poet and his original contributions to the intellectual republic in the sphere of morality and religion and devotional practices and metaphysical speculations will be clearly manifested and wherein we shall discover the spirit of rationalism, liberalism, universalism and catholicity in the moral, religious and philosophical doctrines of the *Gītā*. After finishing our enquiry concerning the Age of the *Gītā* and the Origin of the Bhāgavata Religion in the fourth volume (Book IV), we shall be in a position to interpret the teachings of the *Gītā* in the light of the results of our critical-constructive and historical-comparative studies on the back-ground as well as the after-effects of the Poet's original and valuable contributions to the world's spiritual culture.

### (b) THE BHAGAVATA ORIGIN OF THE GITA

#### *Truth and Errors in Tilak's views*

212 Tilak's opinions on the *Gītā* and its relation to the Nārāvanīya scripture of the Bhāgavata sect have been already discussed in our Book I. Here the main points of his theory of the Bhāgavata origin of the *Gīta* only need consideration. We agree with Tilak that the *Gītā* reconciles the various modes of culture and paths of religion preceding it and that Garbe was wrong in his view of the historical succession of the elements of the Vedic religion for, as we have seen in Book I, there was no Vedāntic interpolation in an original *Gītā* founded on the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system, nor was there any radical transformation of the *Gītā* from its Bhāgavata character to a Brāhmaṇical work with Vedāntic predilections as sus-

ppected by Garbe. Bhakti in India had a purely indigenous development and was not influenced by Christian love in its origin and in the early stages of its evolution at any rate, as supposed by some European scholars. To trace the antecedents of Bhakti one has to study the whole of Vedic and Upanisadic literature and philosophical speculations in India.

The evolution of religion and philosophy in India was not on the lines of Comte's three stages, but each later stage retained the valuable elements of truth of the earlier stage and the latter contained the germs of the former in an implicit state, i.e., the later stages made real and explicit what was only potential and implicit in the earlier.

213. Tilak mentions three classes of Vedic religion in olden times, viz, (1) the way of sacrificial rites, (2) the way of renunciation through knowledge and detachment from the world (*Jñāna* and *vairāgya*), and (3) performing duties with wisdom and detachment, involving reconciliation of action and contemplation. The way of Yoga developed out of the second mode through meditation and concentration on the *saguna Vyakta Pratik* (or symbolical representation) of Brahma or God, which implied knowledge of Brahma. Bhakti is according to Tilak a higher development of Yoga based on the path of renunciation and implies worship of a *Vyakta Pratik* (visible form) of God in human form. But this mode or phase of Bhakti is not present in the Gītā, as we have shown in Book I, Part III, Chapter III, Section III.

214 Tilak admits that in the Upanisads, (1) worship of a part of the sacrifice or *Om* is regarded as a means of *Brahma-chintan* or meditation on God, (2) worship of Rudra, Viṣṇu and other Vedic Gods or Ether (Ākāśa) and other visible forms of manifestation of Divinity, (*Saguna Vyakta Pratik*) is also recognised, and (3) Bhakti towards Rāma, Nṛsīha, Sreekrṣṇa and Vāsudeva is also found there, but these are all directed to the end of attaining Brahma. But we have to note that (1) the Gītā idealises and spiritualises the sacrificial modes of worship and (2) Bhakti towards Viṣṇu, Rudra, Rāma etc is assigned a lower position in our text, and (3) even Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Viṣṇu family is no more than a *Vibhuti* or manifestation of God along with a number of other men and animals enumerated in the tenth Discourse of Gītā.

215 The Yoga Upanisads and the Bhakti Upanisads are later than the Chhāndogya and other old Upanisads, but *Brahmajñāna* (knowledge of Brahma) is still the final goal, e.g. Rudra, Viṣṇu, Achyuta, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva are forms of Brahma. This admission of Tilak seems to lend support to the Upanisadic origin of the Gītā doctrine of *Vibhutis* and *Viśwanāpa* (G. X. and XI). Occasional reforms were no doubt made in the Vedic religion based on the old elements with the chief object of uniting the old *Dharmaṅgas* with the new *Dharmaṅgas* (elements of religion). Vedic religion had already advanced and passed through progressive stages of evolution in this manner, towards the end of reconciling the various paths of religious discipline, which was the

aim of the Smrtikāras (the upholders of tradition or *Smṛti*) in establishing *Āśrama Dharma*. Hence the religion of the Gītā is not engaged alone in the field by way of deviating from tradition, according to Tilak. We may note, however, that the Poet of the Gītā had generally followed the old traditions and at the same time introduced reforms before the systems of Varna and Āśrama were elaborated.

216 Tilak holds that the chief elements of the Vedic religion, viz. (1) the sacrificial rites of the Brāhmaṇas, (2) the Brahmajñāna of the Upanisads, (3) Kapila Sāṅkhya, (4) Yoga consisting in concentration and self-restraint or control of the mind, and (5) *Bhakti* (love and devotion to God) were all taken up by the Gītā from the Upanisads, not directly but through the mediation of the Bhāgavatas. Neither the Chhāndogya Upanisad (which mentions Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, and disciple of Ghora Āṅgirasa) nor Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (with Janaka, a royal sage, as a teacher of Brahmajñāna) could be the immediate source of the Gītā. Here one can discover the root of the error of Tilak. In Book I of our series (Part III, Chapter III) this view of Tilak has been proved to be unhistorical and erroneous. We shall discuss this further in our Book IV.

217 The following lines of reasoning may be urged against Tilak's view of the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā and in support of our conclusion, regarding its Upaniṣadic origin —

(i) We find that Upanisads are mentioned in the Gītā under the terms 'Vedānta' and 'Brahmasūtras', and

certain principal teachings of the poem are said to be sung by the Ṛṣis in the 'Brahmasutra' or taught in the Upaniṣads, and God is said to be *Vedāntavit* (Knower of the Vedānta) as well as *Vedāntakṛt* (Author of the Vedānta).

(ii) Several verses of the Upanisads are quoted in the Gītā (*vide* G. II 19, 20, 29, III 42-43, VIII, XV, XI 48, 53, V 13, XIII 14-15 and *cf.* Katha Up. II 19, 18, 7, III 10-11, VI 7-8, II 15, VI, II 8-9, 23-24, and Śvetāśwataro Up. III 18, 16, 17, respectively).

(iii) Most of the prominent doctrines of the Gītā on philosophy, religion and ethics can be traced to the Upanisads and are found in germs in the latter.

(iv) Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the dialogues in the Gītā, is apparently well-versed in the Vedic and Upaniṣadic literature, and if he is the same epic hero who figures in other parts of the Epic Mahābhārata, Kṛṣṇa is recognised in several places of the latter as a Ṛṣi, well-posted in the Vedas and the Vedāngas.

(v) Even the traditional line of succession of Yoga teachers in G. IV 1-2 is an imitation of the Upaniṣadic mode (*vide* Mundaka I 1. 1-2 etc). Both Tilak and Garbe were wrong in interpreting these verses in favour of Bhāgavatism.

(vi) Ikṣvāku and other royal sages are mentioned in the Gītā (IV. 1-2) which might include Ghora Āṅgirasa, Kṛṣṇa's teacher in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad (III. 17). Janaka is mentioned in G. III, 20, as an ideal sage who attained success through performance of duties and whose example should be followed by others. Brhaspati

is also referred to in G. X. 24 as the chief of the family priests, and we know of one Brhaspati, son of Angirā, as the author of *Nītiśāstra*. So the *Gītā* can be traced to many sources, including the Upanisadic and the Purānic. Tilak makes the *Gītā* unreasonably sectarian by assigning to it a Bhāgavata origin, whereas in real truth and spirit it is the Bhāgavata religion, that originated from, and appropriated, the chief elements of the *Gītāic* teachings, as we have seen partly in Book I and shall finally establish in Book IV.

218 (*vii*) The *Gītā* is non-sectarian or pre-sectarian like the older Upanisads and the orthodox commentators were right in interpreting the *Gītā* teachings in a non-sectarian sense. All references to the *Gītā* in the Nārāyanīya Section prove the earlier origin of our text and cannot be taken as proofs of the Bhāgavata influence on the *Gītā*, as the author of the Nārāyanīya Section himself admits his indebtedness to the *Gītā* and may have incorporated some elements of the *Gītā* religion and ethics in his work (*vide* our Book I) Tilak points out the similarity of the line and succession of teachers in G. IV. 1-2 with that in the Nārāyanīya episode of the Mahābhārata and concludes that the *Gītā* is a product of the Bhāgavatas, adding that all discussion on the *Gītā* without reference to the Bhāgavata religion is erroneous and imperfect. We have held that the facts are just the contrary and that the *Gītā* is the original fountain-head of Bhāgavatism, being really and admittedly the source of its cardinal doctrines, and that the *Gītā* does not mention the God Nārāyaṇa, nor the Sātyatas, nor the Bhāgavata.

doctrine of four Vyuhas, and the association of the Gītā with any such sect is due to a wrong setting of the historical order of things

219 (viii) This view of ours may be further corroborated by reference to the chief texts of the Bhāgavata religion. Tilak himself mentions and examines these in the following order :— (1) The Gītā (2) The Nārāyanīya section of the Mahābhārata, (3) Śāndilya Sūtra, (4) Bhāgavata Purāna, (5) Nārada Pañcharātra, (6) Nārada Sūtra and (7) the works of Rāmānuja and other later teachers.

According to Tilak the last-named and all works of mediaeval and later Vaisnavism were written from the sectarian point of view, to harmonise Bhāgavatism with the philosophical school of *Viśista Advaitavād* or qualified Monism (or strictly Non-Dualism) and these may be summarily dismissed. It is an irony of fate that this remark of Tilak equally well applies to his own view of the Gītā, as he interprets the teachings of the Gītā to fit these in with the Bhāgavata doctrines. The Bhāgavata Purāna (No 4 of the above) is also admittedly later, as it preaches a new form of Bhāgavatism, when the ideal of *Naiskarimya* (renunciation of action) declined in favour of Bhakti (Bhāgavata Purāna I 4 and 5). Similarly Nārada Pañcharātra (No 5), being also of the same type (i.e., Bhakti becoming prominent), is set aside by Tilak; moreover it expressly mentions the Bhāgavata Purāna of 12 parts, the Brahmavaivartta and Viśnu Purānas, and the Gītā and the Mahābhārata, and is therefore less authoritative. The Nāradasūtra (No. 6) and the Śān-

dilyasūtra (No. 3) are hardly older than the Nārada Pañcharātra, and the former of these (No. 6) mentions Vyāsa and Śuka and must be later than the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata Purāna, and the latter (No. 3) quotes from the Gītā and is therefore later than the Gītā and the Mahābhārata. Hence the only point to be settled is whether No. 2 (i.e., the Nārāyanīya episode of the Epic) is prior to No. 1 (i.e., Gītā), and it is here that we differ most from Tilak.

Buddha is an incarnation of Visnu in the Bhāgavata Purāna and the Nārada Pañcharātra, but not one of them in the Nārāyanīya, although Hānsa, Kṛṣṇa and Kalki are included in the list of Avatāras in the last-named,—which proves the antiquity of the Nārāyanīya, according to Tilak.

We have already discussed the question of the Gītā being older than the Nārāyanīya in detail, and may add that Dr. B. N. Seal found reasons to suspect Christian influences in the story of Śweta-Dwīpa (White Island) and in many of the doctrines taught in the Nārāyanīya section, and considered this episode to be a work of the post-Christian period, and this strengthens the conclusion already reached by us regarding the Nārāyanīya section being much later than the Gītā. This will be further discussed when we consider the opinions of various scholars on the Age of the Gītā and the Origin of the Bhāgavata religion in Book IV.

220 (ix) Tilak is right in discarding the views of those scholars who find a foreign influence or Christian origin in the development of Bhakti-cult in the Gītā and other religious treatises of India. Pāṇini knew of Vāsudeva-

Bhakti, and the Buddhist and Jaina literature mentioned the Bhāgavata religion. Bhāgavatism based on devotion towards Vāsudeva arose, according to Tilak, after the intellectualistic Upaniṣads and before Buddha. Senart also held that Bhāgavatism was earlier than Buddhism. This supports our view of the pre-Buddhistic origin of the Gītā, as we have maintained throughout our Book I. the pre-Bhāgavata character of the Gītā.

221. (x) It may be observed that (a) the Gītā mentions "Vāsudeva as all this" (*Vāsudevah sarvam idam*) in VII 19 in the same sense in which the Upaniṣads declare, "All this is Brahma" (*iSarvam khalidam Brahma*). and there is no sectarian air about this verse as the word 'Vāsudeva' has a general connotation, meaning 'the bright God who is a dwelling-place of all.' or 'the God who is above all and in whom everything else lives' and is not a patronymic in the sense of "son of Vasudeva" (vide Pāṇini IV. 3. 98) (b) Vāsudeva as chief of the Viṣṇus in G. X 37 is only one among countless *Tibhutis* of God and cannot be regarded as All-God or Supreme Brahma, according to the Gītā, and therefore no special honour is paid to him thereby.\*

The Gītā not only omits any reference to Nārāvana Pradvumna, Aniruddha and Saṅkarsana which were chief objects of worship in the Bhāgavata religion, but also leaves out the names of Sāttvata and Pañcharātra.—an omission which could not have been acciden-

---

\* I have found reasons to believe this verse to be an interpolation on other grounds, which have been stated in the proper place.

tal, but is probably due to the ignorance of these names on the part of our Poet, which again confirms our conclusion on the Pre-Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā.

222. Tilak has noted that Buddha was already an Avatāra in the Bhāgavata Purāna, but is not mentioned in the Nārāyanīya, which refers to several incarnations including Krṣṇa and Kalkī, but he has failed to draw out a legitimate conclusion from the significant omission of any *avatāras* in the Gītā, for even Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva of the Sāttavata race of the Yadu Clan is not named Avatāra, as Vāsudeva, the Vṛṣṇī, (with Arjuna, named Dhanāñjaya, among the Pāndavas) is enumerated among the Vibhutis. and not recognised as an incarnation at all, which proves conclusively not only the pre-Bhāgavata and pre-Nārāyanīya origin of the Gītā but also the later origin of the Kṛṣṇa-cult, which began by worshipping Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and later on raised him to the position of full-God or 'Purna-Bhagavān' (*Kiṣṇastu Bhagavān svayam*), of whom the other incarnations were only partial manifestations or *amśa avatāras* descended from him. Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā may have been, for all we know, the sage Kṛṣṇa (son of Devaki and disciple of Ghora Āngirasa) mentioned in the Chhāndogya Upanisad (III 17),—a hypothesis that will be discussed in the fourth volume (Book IV).

### (c) THE UPANISADIC GITA AND THE EPIC OR VAISNAVA GITA

223 How the Epic Gītā or the Vaisnava Gītā came out of the Upanisadic Gītā, is a question that has to be answered. To be plain, the Bhāgavata and Vaiṣṇava

scholars themselves must have engrafted the Gītā Upaniṣad on the Kṛṣṇaite Mahābhārata and incorporated it into the Epic as a vital part of their sectarian propaganda. As we have seen, the Gītā was not the product, but the source of the Kṛṣṇa-cult, and we find this acknowledged in the Nārayaniya section of the Epic and other works of the later Vaisnava literature Visnu-worship has been known from the Vedic times, but the poet of the Gītā is not concerned with that either. Visnu is mentioned twice in the Gītā, once as chief of the Adityas (which is different from being the supreme God) in the list of Vibhutis (G. X. 21), and again in the prayer of Arjuna in G. IX. 30, where the term is explicitly used in a sense almost diametrically opposed to that of the Vaisnava God of Preservation (*Pālana*), associated with the tender qualities of non-violence (*ahimsā*), love (*prema*) and friendliness (*maitrī*), as Visnu is here identified rather with the Power of Destruction, and also associated with the Sun-God, characterised by splendour and brilliance, heating the world with scorching rays \* Even Śaṅkara is mentioned as chief of the Rudras and classed with Visnu and others as one of the Vibhutis (G. X. 23)

The worship of Nārāyana is also as old as the Vedic religion and literature, but the Gītā does not refer to it. The Bhāgavata school as represented by the Nārayaniya section of the Mahābhārata is later than the Gītā, as we have seen. Vāsudeva-worship with the Vṛṣṇi family gods

---

\* The whole verse, G. XI. 21 may be translated thus. "O Visnu ! while devouring all these worlds from all sides, thou art licking them with thy flaming mouths ! Thy fiercely hot rays are scorching the whole universe, filling it with bright flames."

(four *Vyuhas*) has also no place in in the *Gītā*, and is definitely later than the *Gītā*, and was perhaps developed by the time the *Nārāyaṇiya* section was composed or inserted in the Epic. As we have noted, the terms *Visnu* and *Vāsudeva* are used in the *Gītā* not in the accepted sense of the Vaisnava literature, but in their earlier non-sectarian connotation.

224 At the time of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā*, *Kṛṣṇa* was not yet deified, or if he were given Divine honours here and there by some of his admirers, neither the Epic nor the Episode intended to glorify him in the original or earlier stages of these works. As we have seen, the incarnation theory had not yet been elaborately developed in all its realistic aspects at the time of the *Gītā*. This leads us to consider two alternatives viz — (1) either the *Gītā* is of ante-Bhāgavata or pre-sectarian origin, or (2) the poet of the *Gītā*, having before him the conflicting religious sects of Vaisnavism, Śaivism and the Bhāgavata religion (and even Buddhism), tried to reconcile these various sects and schools holding diverse religious and philosophical doctrines, by a synthesis of all their best elements, and preached his own gospel in a spirit of universalism, liberalism and toleration, without identifying himself with any of these sects or schools. I accept the middle path between these extremes of alternatives and hold the position that the first alternative is correct so far as the original *Gītā* belonged to the pre-Bhāgavata, pre-Vaisnava and pre-Śaiva period in the sense that the various sects so-called had not come into existence during the period of the composition.

of our text, but the second alternative contains an element of truth so far as the main task of the Poet-seer of the *Gītā* was one of synthesis and harmony of the divergent modes of non-sectarian religious and ethical culture and philosophical thinking that prevailed in his age in the catholic spirit of universalism, liberalism and toleration, although he did not side with any of these modes wholly and entirely. This will be confirmed when we interpret the teachings of the *Gītā* in Vol III. The Epic Editors of the *Gītā* may have taken advantage of this spirit of the *Gītā* and introduced such additions and alterations here and there as to give us an impression as if the *Gītā* were a *Vaiṣṇava* or *Bhāgavata* text.

225. In anticipation of the results of our investigation to be presented in Books III. and IV., and in continuation of our findings on the subject in Book I, we may now sum up our conclusions on the *Upaniṣadic* origin of the *Gītā* and its later *Vaisnava* character in the Epic *Mahābhārata* as follows.—

(1) The *Gītā* must have been written in the *Upaniṣadic* form before *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Bhāgavatism* in their present form appeared in the field.

(2) *Viṣṇu*, *Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa* and perhaps *Nārāyana* were still competing for supremacy in those days and the followers of each tried to raise their respective gods to the position of the supreme God in keeping with the spirit of Vedic culture and tradition.

(3) There were signs of slackening and compromise in the religious atmosphere due to the higher development of spiritual culture and ethical code within the

field of Brāhmaṇism as a result of the action and interaction of these forces.

(4) Bhāgavatism in alliance with Vaiṣṇavism, was trying to assert itself and lay claim to its independence from Brāhmaṇism, if not to its superiority over the latter

(5) The Vedic religion under the control of the priestly classes was still of a prominently sacrificial character, and no social and religious reformer could ignore its influence on the masses of the people.

(6) The Upanisads had already begun the process of internalising and spiritualising the cult of sacrifices and to denounce the external rites and ceremonies and their objects, namely, pursuit of transitory heavenly pleasures

(7) Forces of movements were at work which ultimately manifested themselves in anti-Vedic and anti-Brāhmaṇical spirit already started in the Upanisadic period and found present in the Gītā and the Bhārata Epic, with the result that rituals and caste organisations had to be either put in the background or accepted in a spiritual sense, agreeably to the spirit of reform

(8) There was need of compromise and reconciliation among these conflicting views of thinking and modes of practices. Hence the spirit of reforms and the golden mean to be noted in the teachings of the Gītā, e.g., sacrifices (*yajna*), charities (*dānam*) and austere penances and discipline (*taṭpas*) are to be performed and not renounced, but these must be done with a purity of heart, without attachment to self-interest, without passionate

desire for fruits or without regard for pleasurable consequences in this life or hereafter. Similarly, caste duties are not to be abandoned, but are to be fulfilled with a sense of duty for duty's sake in a spirit of self-dedication to the Universal will, the division of caste being organised not on the basis of birth or heredity but purely on merit and innate disposition or action (Guna and Karma)

(9) Buddhism does not appear to have entered the field at all or was not reckoned with by our poet, but the materialists had already begun to tell on the social life, and the *Gītā* unequivocally denounces their false theories of knowledge and wrong ethics in the form of agnosticism, scepticism and hedonism

(10) The *Gītā* allows no room for sectarian animosity, and where Visnu, Šiva and Vāsudeva are mentioned in our text they are not to be treated as sectarian Gods, but as *Vibhutis* or manifestations of the one God, the Supreme Spirit, with whom the teacher of our dialogue (Krsna) identifies himself. According to eminent Indianists, Šiva as a separate sectarian God was not known or worshipped before the 5th or 6th century. The author of the *Gītā* found different gods being worshipped in his time and there may have been some forms of polytheism, fetishism or animism prevalent in his times in some quarters, as mention is made in the *Gītā* of those who offered sacrifices to devils, *Asuras*, *Rāksas* etc as well as to gods but the liberal and catholic spirit of the *Gītā* is evident from the fact that even religious observances of such worshippers are said to be acceptable

to the one God, who pleases them according to their manner of propitiating Him. The *Gītā* always appeals to the monotheistic (and sometimes even pantheistic—as there was no distinction between the two for the ancient Indian thinkers) instinct of man and favours the worship of one God without a second and lays repeated emphasis on the spirit of single-minded devotion to Him as the Supreme Spirit dwelling in the hearts of all, and not in the sense of a personal Incarnation, be it Hari or Nārayana, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, or Śiva, which are either not mentioned at all or at any rate not deified in the *Gītā*, in the sense of being put on the same rank with the one Supreme God.

(11) The controversy with regard to Viṣṇu-worship and Kṛṣṇa-cult also does not arise, as the *Gītā* does not believe in either, but follows the Upanisadic conception of Brahma, Paramātmā, Aksara, and Uttama Purusa, and never uses the terms Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu in the connotation of Supreme God (except where a prayer is put in the mouth of Arjuna in the Purānic manner, which seems to be an interpolation). Wherever Kṛṣṇa, the teacher in the dialogue, speaks of himself as identified with God (e.g. "Attend only to me," "Be my devotee," "Sacrifice for me," and "Bow to me" etc.), it is to be interpreted in the Upanisadic sense of identity between *Brahma* (the Universal Self) and *Jīva* (the individual self) as illustrated in the dictum "*Tattvamasi*" ("Thou art that") or "*Sohaham*" ("I am He") or "the Purusa in the Sun and the Puruṣa in myself are the same etc of the older Upaniṣads,

(12) The same is true of the Kṣattriya-Brāhmaṇa controversy, from which the Gītā is absolutely free. Among the Vibhutis of God, enumerated in the Gītā, will be found sages and seers, historical and mythical figures of all classes of men and animals and even inanimate things (like hills and rivers); and the duties and qualities of the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣattriyas, Vaśyās and Śūdras are given equal respect, and salvation is offered even to the Śūdras and women who suffered from certain social disabilities in those times. There are no doubt strictures in the Gītā against meaningless rituals performed in a selfish spirit and also depreciation of study of the Vedas without true knowledge (of Brahma), but there is no hint or insinuation against Brāhmaṇas as a class, although the teacher himself was perhaps a non-Brāhmaṇa (a Kṣattriya). Among the Vibhutis, the king is said to be the best of men, but that does not imply any superiority for the Kṣattriyas as a caste, as the term for the king, in Sanskrit has always been identical with the 'Lord of men,' while Brāhmaṇas are sometimes known as 'Gods on Earth.' Similarly the mention of *Janaka* as an ideal sage or of the royal sages (*Rājarsis*) in some verses of the Gītā does not bear a connotation of class superiority for the Kṣattriyas or Royal families at all. This spirit of equality, impartiality and harmony is apparent everywhere in the Gītā.

(13) The religion of the Gītā will be found to represent the culmination of Upanisadic *Jñana*, Bhakti and Karma, as developed from the oldest Chhāndogya and Brhadaranyaka Upaniṣads down to the times of Iśa,

Kena, Kaṭha, Mūndaka and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads. That the Upaniṣads are not without the element of Bhakti or love and devotion to God will be evident from the fact that the name of God, “*Udgītha*”, is said to be the best of lovely things, the sweetest of the sweet (*rasānam rasa-tamah*) in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, and Brahma or Ātmā is spoken of in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad as the most beloved, dearer than the son, wealth and other things, for the sake of which alone the son, wealth and other things become dear to us. These are the two oldest Upaniṣads and the later Upaniṣads abound in similar expressions and even more explicit definition or declarations of Bhakti. The concept of singleminded devotion to the object of worship is not only expressly mentioned in some of the Upaniṣads, where the ideals of concentration and meditation on ‘Om’ and other symbols of Divinity frequently occur and even the process of Yoga is expounded, but also in the teachings of Yājñavalkya to the effect that the *Self* (Brahma) alone is to be seen, heard and meditated on, and it is only when the Ātmā is known and reflected on that everything else is known.

(14) The Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, which mentions Kṛṣṇa, Devaki’s son, as a disciple of Ghora Āṅgirasa, also furnishes us with abundant materials on the method by which the ancient seers tried to see Brahma in each and every part of sacrifices and thereby to transform the sacrificial rites and ceremonies into modes of spiritual culture. In the same Upaniṣad Kṛṣṇa himself is taught a higher cultural outlook on life, viz., that of treating the entire life of man as a sacrificial performance.

with the practice of moral and spiritual virtues as fees to be paid to the preceptor Katha and Svetāśvatara Upanisads expressly mention the terms Yoga and Bhakti respectively, and Iśā and Kena Upanisads are so fully saturated with higher ideals of God-consciousness, and devotion to and service of the One Supreme God, that the Gītā may be said to be a commentary on, or exposition of, their ideas and ideals. For example, the former tells us that neither by *Vidyā* (knowledge) nor by *Avidyā* (non-knowledge or work) is the ideal of life immortal or enlightenment and deliverance from bondage to be attained, but it is only by combining both that one can cross over the sea of death and attain immortality, and the latter repeatedly affirms that God or Brahma is the One Spiritual Being, who is not seen, heard nor perceived by senses nor grasped by words or thoughts, and whose power enables us to see, hear perceive, think and express and use words for conveying thoughts, and that Brahma is the Supreme Power above all gods, Agni, Vāyu, Indra and others and it is He that grants victory to the gods in their war with the Asuras or demons and power to the gods to discharge their duties by His grace and by His glory.

(15) The origin of the *Ekānta dharma* of the Bhāgavatas, which was preached by Nārā�ana in the White Island and by Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Vṛṣṇi family and Sāttvata race, according to the Epic and Purāṇa literature, may be easily traced from the principal elements of the Gītāic thought and religion which were mainly based on the Upanisads. Even the development

of Vaisnavism, which owes its origin to the worship of the Vedic God, Visnu, and was subsequently combined with the worship of Nārāyana and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Bhāgavatas, lends itself to be explained in the light of the main teachings of the Gītā on God and the world and the soul and their mutual relations. The Bhāgavata doctrine of Vyuhas is nothing but the personification of the higher and lower principles which are said to be the *parā* and *aparā* Prakrtis of God in G. VII. 4-5.

(16) It cannot be denied that in the present Gītā there are some verses (e.g., G. IX. 11-12, X. 37, XI. 41, 42, 46, which I consider to be interpolations) that appear to lend support to the Kṛṣṇa-cult of the later Bhāgavata and Vaiṣṇava school, but these verses only confirm our suspicion that the original Upanisadic Gītā was retouched by the Vaisnava editors of the Epic Kṛṣṇa. The teacher of the Gītā, may very well be the Upanisadic Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, mentioned in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, who was later on identified with the Epic and Purānic Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva worshipped by the Bhāgavatas when the latter attained the reputation of having been the founder of a new system of religion and philosophy and was held in high honour as such, especially by the Sāttvāta race or the Vṛṣṇi family of the Yādava clan. Thus and thus alone can we explain how the teachings of Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā-Upaniṣad led to the Bhāgavata school in its earliest origin and largely influenced the course of evolution of the early Vedic and Vaiṣṇava religions. Herein lies the significance of the Nārāyanīya verses that assign the origin of the doctrines of the *Ekānta Dharma* or Bhāga-

vata school to the Hari Gītā or the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the eve of the war of Kurukṣetra,—a view that seems to be historically sound,—as the Gītā certainly preceded the Nārāyaṇīya text of the Epic and was as such the source of the Bhāgavata doctrines contained in the latter. It is clearly evident that the Gītā could not have been the product of the Bhāgavata movement.

(17) The Epic in its present form being in many parts Kṛṣṇaite in character, it is natural to assume that the Epic Gītā in its present position is capable of Kṛṣṇite interpretation. Revelation of the Universal Form by Kṛṣṇa in Discourse XI and Arjuna's prayer, addressing him as the Supreme God or All-God, and some other verses in the Gītā smacking of a sectarian spirit in favour of a personal God (Kṛṣṇa) seem to lend countenance to such an impression. These passages—if they are not later interpolations,—can only be taken as evidences in support of our hypothesis (which cannot be proved conclusively of course) that the original Upaniṣadic Gītā, when inserted in the Mahābhārata and converted into an Epic Gītā, was rehandled by the Vaiṣṇava or Bhāgavata Editors in order to suit their purpose of a sectarian propaganda, of which the whole epic literature was made an effective vehicle.

(18) This revision or modification of the original or what we prefer to call the Upaniṣadic Gītā, however, did not proceed to the extent of transforming the contents or spirit of the entire text in its Upaniṣadic form, as we can infer from the fact that the editors did

not allow those passages wherein Krsna is presented as a human sage or teacher of spiritual culture on the lines of the Upanisadic doctrines to be altogether left out or radically altered. And that is why we can still interpret the *Gītā* in the spirit of the Upanisadic ideals of knowledge, action and devotion and their harmony, without a sectarian or scholastic bias even to this day. Prominence given to knowledge and disinterested action and single-minded devotion to the Supreme Self is still to be recognised as Upanisadic. The inclusion of the *Gītā* among the three *prasthānas* of the *Vedānta* could not have been possible otherwise. I have tried to interpret the so-called *Vaisnava* or *Krsnaite* verses of the present *Gītā* in the Upanisadic sense without giving them any sectarian bias in my "Teachings of the *Gītā*" in the light of modern thought (Book III).

(19) The chief elements of the religious and philosophical teachings of the *Gītā*, viz., three *Purusas*, two *Avyaktas* and the third higher principle which is above *Purusa* and *Prakrti*, were not introduced by the *Bhāgavatas*, as wrongly supposed by some scholars, but are entirely derived from or developed out of the Upanisadic philosophy.

(20) The Poet of the *Gītā* had the originality and genius of a poet and a prophet and a thinker and not the ratiocinative intellect or metaphysical talent of a philosopher brought up in a school, and that is why he could bring about a poetic (not philosophic) synthesis of the *Vedānta Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* concepts as they prevailed in the intellectual atmosphere of his environment, before

they were reduced to a systematic form and developed into elaborate schools of philosophy, presented to us by the Sūtra literature. Many of these philosophical or theological ideas must have been common properties of the intellectual circles of those days, which were floating from mouth to mouth, as it were, and waiting for fixed terms of settled habits of thinking. We find the Gītā using some of the philosophical terms rather loosely and not in their accepted, technical sense of the later metaphysical systems. This is what one might naturally expect both because the Poet of the Gītā was not a philosopher in the modern acceptation of the term and because his work was composed at a time when the philosophical systems of India, as we know them, were not in existence or were still in the melting pot and in the process of making. It is not unlikely that the very few (one or two only) verses of the Gītā where Kṛṣṇa is represented as a Supreme Being, or has been given a higher place than Brāhma, are later Vaiṣṇava additions. It must be admitted, however, that we may still interpret these verses of the Gītā differently without a sectarian bias by employing other connotation for each of these concepts than what meets the eye.

(ii) Nothing could be more fatal to the study of Indian philosophy and religions than the erroneous conclusions drawn by superficial students of Indian Scriptures or Sanskrit literature from mere similarity of words or resemblance in terms, specially in regard to chronology. For instance, many scholars, noticing the presence in the Gītā of such terms as Māyā, Puruṣa and

Prakrti, three gunas, and order of gradation among the elements of mental life like senses (*indriyāni*), sensourium (*manas*), understanding (*buddhi*), egoity (*ahankāra*) etc , are inclined to jump at the inference that the Poet of the Gītā must have been familiar with the Vedānta (of Saṅkara's type) and the Sāṅkhya system in their present form. Similarly, the presence of such words as *sannyāsa*, *nirvāna* and those denoting the ideas of old age and death and sorrow and disease and suffering in the Gītā has led other scholars to think that the author of the Gītā must have been influenced by the Buddhistic thought, culture and religion. The presence of the concept of Bhakti in our text has also suggested to some critics the trace of Christian influence on the poem, while others utilise the terms Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu in the Gītā for proving its Vaiṣṇava origin in the sense that the author of the poem must have been a worshipper of Viṣṇu, the Vedic God or in the sense that the Gītā is a Bhāgavata text and its Poet must have been a worshipper of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Epic. We have had to guard ourselves against such superficial studies in Books I and II, and shall expose the fallacy of such scholars in the subsequent volumes.

(22) Dr. B. N. Seal rightly traces the origin of the *Bhakti* religion and literature of India to the Upanisads. Most of the Vaiṣṇava religious elements lend themselves to be derived from the Vedic and Smṛti works, e.g. incarnation, *vyuha*, ideal of action, repentence, faith, grace, universal salvation are all indigenous or due to Buddhistic influences and need not be con-

ceived as having been borrowed from Christianity. As a matter of fact, India came in contact with Christianity in the fourth century or fifth century A D generally, though isolated Christians might have come to some parts of our country a century earlier. The religion of Christ had a liberating influence on the Vaisnava or Bhāgavata schools in their later stages of development perhaps, and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata is considered by Dr Seal to have been the product and proof of such influence. We must remember, however, that the Gītā represents an earlier period of Indian religious and philosophical history than the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Epic, and a much earlier strata of thought and culture than those of the technical Bhakti Śāstras as well as the technical philosophical schools of India.

(23) As to the relation between Bhāgavatism and Buddhism, Dr Hem Chandra Roy Choudhury has gone into the question with some precision and collected ample materials to show that the former had influenced the latter e.g. (i) The Ghata Jātaka mentions the story of Vāsudeva; (ii) the virtue of *Ahimsā* is already taught in the Chhāndogya Upanisad after which it must have received prominence in the doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism, (iii) "Saddharma Pundarika" contains a number of passages that are parallel to the Gītā verses, which establishes without doubt that the former echoed the latter, (iv) Aśwaghosa's "Awakening of Faith" shows clear traces of the influence of the Gītā. From a comparison of these two works, Dr Roy Choudhury concludes that the Gītā preceded Aśwaghosa, who was fairly

acquainted with the Krsna story (*c f.* Buddha Charit Canto I, 51). (v) Dr Macnicol agrees with Senart that the Buddhist traditions certainly move in a Krsnaite atmosphere. (vi) Both Senart and Poussin held that there was intimate relation between the new way of deliverance taught by Buddhism and the old theistic cults of India, and favoured the conclusion that the devout worshippers of Nārāyana had much to do in the making of the Buddhist doctrine even from its inception. As we maintain that the Gītā belongs to an earlier period than the Nārāyana-cult and the Bhāgavata religion, it follows that our poem was pre-Buddhistic in its origin.

(24) Dr. Macnicol saw in the Gītā a unique combination of intellectual seriousness, ethical nobility and religious fervour and the meeting or union of two streams, one coming from the reflective and metaphysical religion of the older Upanisads and the other from the religion of personal devotion. But he does not hold this combination to be due to deliberate theological interest nor to be the result of a pact between Brāhmaṇas and Non-Brāhmaṇas against the common Buddhist enemy, and ascribes it rather to the speculative atmosphere of the Upaniṣads and private worship to one and the only God.

As regards the date of the Gītā, Macnicol's view is that it was post-Buddhistic and considerable part of it was pre-Christian. This is really in line with Garbe's and Lorimer's views, which we have found reasons to reject (*vide* Book IV).

(25) While adhering to our view of the pre-Buddhist-

ic date of the original Upanisadic Gītā, we are, however, inclined to concede that the present Epic Gītā with Vaisnava colouring may have been retouched by interested sectarian propagandists during the post-Buddhistic period, as in all probability one of the strongest reasons that led the Editors of the Epic to insert the Bhagavad-Gītā Upanisad in the Mhābhārata and to give it a Bhāgavata character to some extent was a diplomatic alliance between the Brāhmaṇical supporters of the Vedic religion and culture and the Vaiṣṇava founders of the Bhāgavata sect, associated with a combination of Viṣṇu-worship, Kṛiṣṇa-worship and Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa cult, in order to fight their common rivals, viz., the champions of the newly preached faith of Buddhism, which had then been just gathering strength and threatening to undermine the Vedic society and the Vaiṣṇava and Bhāgavata religious congregations alike. All these problems relevant to the study of the Gītā will be dealt with in detail when we discuss the questions relating to the age of the Bhagavad-Gītā and the origin of the Bhāgavata religion in Book III. of our series. Then it will be seen how the elements of truth left as a residue after elimination of the errors contained in the views of Hopkins, Garbe, Telang, Bhandarkar, Vaidya, Subba Rao, Seal, Tilak, Bankimchandra, Tattvabhushan, Hemchandra Rai Choudhury, Radhakrishnan, Surendranath Das Gupta and others converge towards the same irresistible conclusions and confirm generally the position we have maintained on the Upanisadic origin and back-ground of the Gītā, and

its pre-Christian, pre-Buddhistic as well as pre-Bhāgavata date of composition and later incorporation in the body of the Epic Mahābhārata by its Vaiṣṇava or Bhāgavata Editors. We have purposely kept in reserve the question of the historicity of Kṛṣṇa and Veda-Vyāsa, Bādarāyaṇa, or Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyaḥa and their relation to the Gītā and the Mahābhārata in the present volume, as these complex problems require careful examination in connection with the age of the Gītā and the origin of the Bhāgavata movement, which forms the subject-matter of Book IV.

226. We have finished our survey of the religious, social, moral and intellectual environments of the Poet-prophet who composed the Gītā or inspired its golden teachings, so far as we could gather from the eighteen Discourses of seven hundred verses in this Song Celestial. We shall now conclude with an estimate of the Poet's genius and originality of contributions in the field of religion and philosophy, to be followed by a forecast of the tasks and problems that will occupy us in the future volumes

#### (d) THE POET'S GENIUS AND ORIGINALITY

227. The philosophical genius of the Poet of the Gītā has been exhibited not only in the handling of the concepts of the Vedic and Vedantic seers relating to God and the human soul, and in the harmonising of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga modes of ethical discipline and devotional practices, but also in his treatment of philosophical-psychological, ethical and metaphysical—as well as religious and theological problems and offering solutions thereto

in a way that reminds us of the philosophical and ethical methods and concepts of western thinkers, theologians and moral philosophers, like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle of ancient Greece and Kant, Hegel, Green and Sidgwick of modern Europe. His conception of the immortality of the soul (G. II. 11-25), his theory of disinterested action, without attachment and without regard for consequences (G. II. 47-51, III. 7-8, 19, 25, IV. 16-22, etc.) his philosophy of conduct based on the principle of "duty for duty's sake", his classification of virtues, defining the characteristics of a wiseman established in reason (*sthita-prajña*, G. II. 53-61) and of those who are the Beloved of God (G. XII. 13-20), his description of what constitutes knowledge in full conformity with the needs and requirements moral life (G. XIII. 7-11), his sublime presentation of the picture of an Ideal Man or Yogi (G. II. 61, 64, 65, 68-72, III. 17, 18, 26, 28, 30, V. 18-21, 24-28, VI. 19-23, 27-29, XVIII. 49-58), his delineation of the marks of those who are born with Divine qualities (*Darvi sampad*, G. XVI. 13), his conception of the Superman who transcends the three Gunas (Gunātīta, G. XIV. 22-25) and such other contributions to the world's storehouse of moral and philosophical ideas will ever bear eloquent testimony to his supreme genius as an original thinker of the highest rank. His analysis of desires and passions, tracing the genesis of the vicious and immoral tendencies in the hearts of men (G. II. 62-63, 67, III. 34, 36-43, V. 22-23, VI. 33-36, XVI. 7-18, 21-22), giving us an accurate and at the same time vivid picture of the men of wicked or demonical disposition

(which would apply even to the people of devilish nature in the modern age), his emphasis on the value of wisdom and insistence on the necessity of training the logical or rational faculty of man as an indispensable factor of intellectual discipline and rational thinking, which are according to our Poet-Prophet very important elements of moral and spiritual culture (G. IV 33-42, V. 16-17, VI. 8, G VII 16, 19, XVIII 18-22), his reconciliation of the paths of action and contemplation through a proper understanding of the nature of action and the agent and practical reason (G IV 2-15, VI 1-4, XVIII. I-II, 23-28, 29-34), his division of castes and defining of caste duties according to innate or inborn natural qualities, dispositions, talents and activities of the agents (G. XVIII 41-48), his correct estimate of the principle of selfhood as the ultimate basis of moral conduct with self-realisation in the sense of God-consciousness as the goal of man's moral and religious life, and the spirit of resignation and submission to the will of God as the best and highest mode of ethical discipline, devotional practice and spiritual culture (G VI. 5-6, 24-26, 30-32, 46-47, XII 6-7, XVIII. 13-17, 61-62, 56-58, 64-65),—all these special features of the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā entitle our Poet to an eminent position in the history of psychological, ethical and religious thought not only of India but also of the whole civilised world. His conception of God as the immanent and transcendent Substance, as manifesting Himself in each and every atom and source or phenomenon in Nature as well as in each and every detail of affairs and activities of human

society, not excluding even the ghastly tragedies of individual life and scenes of bloodshed and fratricidal wars among nations on earth (G. VII., IX., X., XI., XV., XVIII.), his message of hope and faith for the struggling and suffering souls, and assurance of universal salvation for mankind, including Sudras and women who were shut out of the zone of Vedic culture in those days (G VI. 40-45, VII 20-22, IX. 22-26, 30-34) will mark him out in the universal history of the development of culture and humanity as a far-seeing prophet and a pioneer thinker of rare genius and ability. His synthesis of the dualistic concepts of *ksara* or perishable and *aksara* or imperishable substance through the conception of *Purusottama* (the Supreme Spirit), and his distinction of the manifest (*Vyakta*), the lower unmanifest (*avyakta*) and the higher Unmanifest are among the original contributions made by our Poet to the development of Indian thought.

228. The Poet of the *Gītā* has given us a Gospel of Love and Service, Peace and Goodwill. His teachings are not only in perfect agreement with the best traditions of the Vedic and Jewish traditions that preceded his age, but also completely in harmony with the highest and noblest ethical and spiritual messages of the Christian and Muslim religions as well as the *Bhāgavata*, *Vaisnava* and *Buddhist* Dispensations that came after him. In this Song Divine the Poet has combined the unity of Godhead with a variety of His manifestations, the morality of outward conduct with the purity and sublimity of inner life, the universality of reason with the catholicity of

love, the austere rigorism of passionless and disinterested action with the sweetness and charitableness of disposition towards all creatures, and the autonomy and independence of the human self with entire subordination and spirit of selfless submission to the will of God as the highest Self of all beings. The *Gītā* is *par excellens* the scripture of a spiritual philosophy and musical religion, rightly designated as the Song of the Lord, the science of the Absolute and the Infinite (Brahma-Vidya) and the art of living in unison with the Divine Centre of Reality (Yoga-śāstra). No wonder, therefore, that the *Gītā* holds before us the ideal of a God-centred life, a life sweetened by the love of God, purified by the knowledge of God, internalised by the concentrated thought or mediation of God, resigned to the loving care of God, reassured by faith in God, inspired by the holy spirit of God, transformed by the touch of God, unified by the realisation of the universal presence and activity of God, attracted heavenward perpetually by the magnet of God, and liberated by the grace of God. It is this life of Sweetness, Purity, Inwardness, Resignation (resulting in Reassurance), Inspiration, Transformation, Unification, Attunement and Liberation, upheld by the Poet of the *Gītā* that contributes to the *Spiritual* character of the Song Divine—all the letters of the word SPIRITUAL representing the initial letters of the above-mentioned spiritual qualities of the life Divine as conceived by our Poet. Such a spiritual life must be lived by a Yogi, who is at the same time a *Jñāni* (wise), a *Karmi* (a man of action performing duties), and a *Bhakta* (loving devotee of God). The

Gītāic ideal of Bhakti, it will be seen, does not merely enjoin blind faith in God or emotional love of God, but demands *Jñāna* and *Karma* as well, *i e*, wisdom united with love and devotion, and fulfilment of duty and rendering of services in a spirit of love for God and humanity. The life of such a devotee or Bhakta is enlightened by the thought of God which is Truth, energised by the moral force of God which is Goodness or Holiness, and hallowed and glorified by the joy and sweetness of God which is Love or Beauty The Poet of the Gītā calls the Ideal Man a *Yogi*, not only because *Yoga* means union and a *Yogi* has to unite in his life perfect knowledge and understanding, reason and wisdom (*Jñān*), perfect action and dutifulness, service and welfare of all, and perfect devotion (*Bhakti*), but also and mainly because a *Karma-Yogi* must be wholly and entirely united with God in knowledge, service and love, his life being electrified by the spark of Divine wisdom, moulded and shaped completely by the Divine will into a likeness or image of Divine perfection, so that he may be said to be self-dedicated to the service of God, absorbed in the life of God, merged in the body of God and entered in the spirit of God Yoga in the Gītā is more than meditation and concentration, which is the usual connotation of the term according to the *Yoga-śāstra*, although direction of the mind towards God (*Iśvara-pranidhān*) by way of concentration of the mind falls within the Yoga practice as taught by the Theistic Yoga system We have two beautiful definitions of Yoga from the Poet of the Gītā, *viz.*, (i) *Yoga is samatva or equilibrium of life, balanced*

poise, holding oneself steadily in unison with the centre of gravity as it were,—true to God who is verily the centre of the universe. In this sense *Yoga* implies also equanimity of mind, equitable treatment, equal regard for all irrespective of social position, wealth and learning, treating enemies even on the same level as friends (*sama darsan*), it includes also what Aristotle calls the Golden Mean or following the *via media*. -(11) *Yoga* is *Karmaśu kauśalam* or skill in the performance of actions or expertness in the art of living, which implies ability to handle properly various life-problems in varied life-situations. A Yogi has to maintain the equilibrium of all the elements of mental life, recognising the sovereignty of reason or wisdom in the administration of the inner republic, securing the balanced order and symmetry of the conflicting demands of the body, mind and spirit and tactfully steering the vessel of life aright till it reaches the Divine Port of its destination. The Poet of the *Gītā* enjoins a life of purity and simplicity, of uprightness and straightforward dealings, of love and charity and benevolence and devotion to the welfare of all creatures, and at the same time a life of complete independence, free from the cares and anxieties of the world, free from passions and impulses, from desires and inclinations, from attachment and affection. The ideal man of the *Gītā* lives a life of pure love, pure duty and pure wisdom, regardless of fruits and heedless of consequences, renouncing all and surrendering all for the sake of love and service of God, to whom as the sole-and sovereign Ruler of the universe, he submits his will.

and owes his loyal allegiance. In this utter self-abnegation in love and devotion to the Divine Lord and Master, Father and Preceptor, lies the beauty of man's life here on earth, the joy of life, peace and bliss of life, sweetness of life, symphony of life, the music of life.

229. The Divine Song, which the Bhāgavad-Gītā verily and literally is, can really be characterised by seven special notes MUSICAL, which are essential and component features and parts of the Philosophy and Religion of the Gītā. Just as the white rays of the sun can be analysed through a spectrum and broken up into seven different rays when passing through a prism—with their respective colours, violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red—so can the MUSICAL notes of the Song Divine be split up by literally spelling the word 'MUSICAL' and discovering in each letter thereof the initial of the special characteristics of the Philosophy and Religion of the Gītā, *viz.*—

(i) M stands for Morality of the World-order, implying moral government of the universe sustained by a Power that maketh for righteousness, secureth the triumph of justice and fall of injustice, and prepareth the way for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven

(ii) U stands for Universality of Truth as a corollary from the Unity of Being or Existence, implying that the truths of religion and philosophy as revealed or taught in the Gītā are of universal application, true for all ages and all races, valid for all castes, creeds and colours, all-embracing, all-comprehending, beyond the barriers of terrestrial geography and national history, because the

Gītā reconciles reason with revelation and preaches the practical maxim of 'all for one and one for all', in consonance with the metaphysical doctrine of "All in One and One in All", which is the root of Cosmopolitanism, and because truths, philosophical and religious, are one everywhere.

(iii) S stands for Spirituality, viewing the world of matter, life and mind as spirit-centred, soul-centred, and laying stress on the inwardness of religion, freeing it from rites, sacraments and ceremonial observances, demanding purity of worship in truth and spirit, inspired by love and devotion, and finding outward expression and joyous fulfilment in service and sacrifice.

(iv) I stands for Immortality of the soul, commensurate with the spiritual nature of man, implying survival and continuance of the human self and personality after death and bodily destruction, which follows of necessity from the Infinite and Eternal Life Divine, of which we are parts and in which all individual souls participate. This belief in the future life or immoratality of the soul inspires the students of the Gītā with indomitable hope, assures to them freedom from fear of death, raises them above cowardly submission to unjust rule of tyranny or to evil customs and superstitions of society, and makes them fearlessly indifferent to public opinion and popular criticism in matters of social reforms, political legislation and scientific, philosophical, literary or historical investigations.

(v) C stands for Catholicity of heart, consideration for others, compassion for all creatures, charitable dis-

position and cultural refinement, implying regard for the feelings and sentiments of one's friends and neighbours, toleration for the principles and opinions of even one's enemies and opponents, sympathetic understanding of other people's outlook, respect for human personality and philanthropy.

(vi) A stands for Attainment of All-round Perfection, all-sided and harmonious development of human faculties and latent powers of the human soul in all its aspects, —cognitive or intellectual, conative or volitional and affective or emotional, implying educational improvements, social advancement, moral progress, physical, mental and spiritual culture, political and economic reconstruction as well as religious regeneration of men ; or in one word *At-one-ment* with God who is Perfect in every respect and *Attunement* with the Universe which is His Song Divine.

(vii) L stands for Love which is and should be the spring or fountainhead of Liberty implying freedom obtained by love and friendship, fellowship in love and service, liberty of thought and expression freedom of worship, freedom of action or of saying and doing what is right and good, deliverance from the bondage of selfishness, narrow-mindedness, passions and prejudices, freedom that fulfils itself in Love for humanity, Loving service for the sick and suffering and in Love and service of God as the Self of all.

This MUSICAL tone of the Gītā is manifested in the spirit of moral earnestness, universalism, spiritual rationalism, inwardness and immortality of the soul-

life, internalisation of sacrifices, of scriptural studies, of austere penances, of charities and other religious customs and observances, catholicity and liberalism, as well as in the promise of universal liberation, salvation or deliverance based on love and devotion of the seekers after spiritual life and all-forgiving grace of God vouchsafed to all devotees who resign themselves entirely at His feet, irrespective of sex or caste or learning or social status. That this tone or spirit prevades the whole poem will be more than apparent when we interpret the teachings of the Gītā in the light of modern thought in Book II of our series. We shall also note in its proper place how this spirit of the Gītā has permeated the later stages of the development of religious and philosophical thought in India down to the modern age of the "Śāntiniketan" and the "Gītāñjali" of the world-poet Rabindranath Tagore.

#### (e) TASKS AND PROBLEMS AHEAD

290 The Gītā is the centre, the pivot, the middle-point as it were for researchers in ancient Indian culture as well as the starting-point for the students of Indian religious and philosophical history, as this Song Divine is at once the root of the Epic and Purānic religion and philosophy and the flower and fruit of the old Vedic and Upaniṣadic culture. One can trace from the Gītā backward to the evolution of the Vedic religion and civilisation through the development of the Brāhamanas and Āranyakas (forestlore) and the Brahma-vidyā of the Upaniṣads, out of which 'the Bhagavad-Gītā—(an Upaniṣad sung by the Supreme God)—was churned like

cream or butter as it were from milk, its teachings being the essence or crystallised product of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads, and their glorious cultural heritage in the field of philosophy, religion, morality, literature and art of living. One may equally well trace downward from the Bhagavad-Gītā the line of later and subsequent development of Indian thought and culture—religious, social, intellectual, philosophical, ethical or spiritual. For, it is undeniable that the whole cultural history of India since the composition of the Gītā, especially in the domain of religion, philosophy and moral life, has been largely influenced by the movement of thought and action, embracing reform in social life, manners, customs and institutions, inaugurated and initiated by the eminent poet-seer of the Gītā. The stream of Bhakti had its origin in the devotional practices of the singers of the Sāma Veda school, as reflected in the *Udgītha upāsanā* of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, where the expression ‘sweeter than the sweetest’ (*rasānam rasatamah*) referring to the name of the Supreme Spirit or Brahma (*Udgītha*) meets us for the first time. The same stream has had a continuous flow from the Hīmālayan heights of the Gītā through the older Bhakti literature of Sāndilya-Sutras, Pañcharātra, and the four *Sanas* as well as through the Epic and Purānic literature as represented by the Nārāyaṇiya section of the Mahābhārata, the Harivansha, Viṣnupurāna, Bhāgavata purāna and other scriptures of Vaishnavism, Bhāgavatism, Vāsu-deva-Kṛṣṇa cult, Rādhā-Syāma sect, as well as the traditional line of commentators like Rāmānuja, Mādhwā,

Ballavācharyya, Viśnuswāmi, Nimbārka and others, culminating ultimately in Gaudiya Vaisnavism of Bengal led by Sree Chaitanya (Lord Gaurāṅga) and his companions. This line of study will form the subject matter of subsequent volumes

231 To study the philosophy and religion of the Gītā properly in the light of its background and in relation to its bearing and influence on the subsequent history of Indian thought and culture we must be prepared to take the trouble of acquainting ourselves as far as practicable with the evolution of philosophy and religion all over the world in different epochs of world-history. For instance we have to find out how the Vedic religion and culture grew and extended itself among the non-Aryans, when and how the Brāhmaṇas, Āranyakas and the Upanisads were composed and separated from the Mantras and Sanhitās of sacrificialism, how the Upanisadic Vedānta related itself to the Purva Mīmānsā of the Karmakānda, to the intellectual and moral disciplines which came to be known later as the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems, to the Bhakti school of the later Vaisnavas and the Bhāgavatas, and also to the Buddhist and Jaina cultures. A student of the Bhāgavad-Gītā should be familiar not only with the history of the various religious movements in India and know how Vaisnavism, Kṛṣṇaism, Śaivism and other cults assumed their present sectarian form and mutually influenced their respective courses of development, but also be conversant with the growth and development of Judaism and Christianity, of Greek and Roman cultures and their points of contact with the

Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist and Vaisnava *cum* Bhāgavata cultural and spiritual forces and thought-currents in India One must have some idea of the internal and external factors in the Vedic and Brāhmaṇical cultures and in the lives and environments of their priests, sages, heroes and thought-leaders, that evoked the protestant and non-conformist movements of Bhāgavatism and Jainism and Buddhism, and also of the forces that led the Vaisnavas (worshippers of Visnu) to identify their Deity, Visnu, with Kṛṣṇa of the Bhāgavatas, and again led the worshippers of the Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva to join in the worship of the cosmic God, Nārāyaṇa, and thereby to bring about an amalgamation of Vaisnavism, Bhāgavatism and Nārāvanism, and finally how they all combined with the upholders of Vedic and Brāhmaṇical culture and thereby effected a strong alliance of Hindu spiritual forces that eventually succeeded in combating and defeating their common rival, Buddhism It is interesting to note and investigate the important part played by the Gītā as a non-sectarian gospel of Universalism, Rationalism, Spiritualism, Liberalism, Catholicity, and Moral Rigorism and Puritanism, in bringing about a reconciliation of all these conflicting sects of religion and schools of philosophy, or a harmonious synthesis of the divergent world-views into a *Yoga* or union of lasting glory and permanent value Although the Gītā was composed as an Upanisad in the days of the Rsis of old, its teachings were acceptable to the Epic editors and Purānic writers no less than to the various contending religious sects and disputing metaphysical systems of the

later ages. That is how we may conceive the spirit of the Gītā to have influenced the Vaisnava, Bhāgavata and Nārāyaṇiya sects in favour of one common spiritualistic religion and enabled the new reformist movements to make up their differences and adjust themselves to the old Brāhmaṇical and Vedic religions and cultures. It may be imagined that the Brāhmaṇas and non-Brāhmaṇas, the Aryans and non-Aryans, the Vedic and non-Vedic members of the Hindu society learnt from the teachings of the Gītā how to live in harmony and peace and goodwill with one another, absorbing and assimilating the best elements in each other's cultures and practices. For example, the Gītā doctrine of Yoga, reconciling the paths of Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti, or action, contemplation and devotion, exerted a healthy influence on the Buddhists and was instrumental in the formation of the Mahāyāna school. Similarly the liberal and catholic spirit of the Gītā teachings, laying stress on the unity of the Divine Substance and Power that manifests itself in a variety of gods and heroes and noble souls, must have facilitated the reapproachment between the conflicting sects of Vaisnavism, Bhāgavatism, Śaivism and other minor religious groups within the fold of Hinduism and at the same time enabled Brāhmaṇism to recognise the Buddha as an incarnation of the Vedic God, Viṣṇu and the Epic and Purānic God-man, Kṛṣṇa,—a process which was imitated or assimilated by Gaudiya Vaisnavism at the time of its adopting Lord Gaurāṅga as an incarnation of Śree Kṛṣṇa of Brndāban. Our study of the Gītā cannot be said to be as fruitful as it should

be unless we take into account the social and political factors and reasons of the state diplomacy that determined the growth and evolution of religious and philosophical schools as well as cultural movements in India in the days of Brāhmaṇical and Buddhistic rivalry,—a factor that may well explain how the Upaniṣadic Gītā was turned into the Epic Gītā with a Vaiṣṇava colouring.

282. Among other problems awaiting solution from the Gītā scholars of the present age may be mentioned the following:—

(i) How were Viṣṇu, Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and other Vedic gods, after having been raised to the highest rank and recognised to be the chief of gods, gradually unseated from the supreme position of the heavenly hierarchy and relegated to a lower position in favour of one or the other of the pet gods of the Vedic priests who were in turn made prominent and ascendant for a time only to make room for yet another Lord of the gods? A correct answer to this question might enable us to settle the historical controversy in regard to the priority of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva among the objects of worship recognised by the Vaiṣṇavas and Bhāgavatas.

(ii) How were myths and Purāṇas built up on the doings and undoings of the Vedic gods and ancient heroes? How were nature-gods anthropomorphised and human heroes deified? And how were these two classes of gods (i.e., personified nature-gods and deified human heroes) brought into relationship with one another?

(iii) Were the Kṛṣṇa of the Vedas, of the Brāhmaṇas, and of the Upaniṣads and the Kṛṣṇa of the Bhagavad-Gītā, of the Mahābhārata and of the Purāṇas different persons or was it one and the same hero, seer, teacher, warrior, friend, philosopher and guide of the Pāṇḍavas son of Devakī-Vasudeva and yet son of Yasodā-Nanda, the prince of Dwārakā, the cowherd boy of Brndāban and lover of the Gopis (cowherdesses)—all in one—that played a different role in different situations and whose life-history is narrated in a variety of scriptures in various forms?

(iv) Was there a real Vasudeva (with Devakī as his wife) who was the father of Kṛṣṇa? Or was the name coined later by those who deified Kṛṣṇa in order to find a connecting link between the God Vāsudeva, which according to Pāṇini's grammar was not a patronymic but could be derived otherwise with a spiritual meaning, and Kṛṣṇa Devakiputra mentioned in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad as well as the Kṛṣṇa of Mathura and Brndāban?

(v) Was Kṛṣṇa a solar god, mythological god or allegorical god, as held by many scholars, or a real historical person? In the latter case, were there several different Kṛṣṇas born in different periods of ancient Indian history in different parts of the country (be it at Muttra, Brndāban or anywhere else) who were amalgamated into one in course of the progressive evolution of the Kṛṣṇa-cult?

(vi) When and how were Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa identified with each other and when and how were these two gods again made into one with Nārāyaṇa of Śvetadvipa, as described in the Nārāyaṇiya section of the Epic Mahābhārata and with Vāsudeva, God of the Sāttvatas or Bhāgavatas?

233. The field of Indological researches bristles with controversies on the above and similar other problems. The study of the Gītā and its Background cannot be completed without a survey of this wide region. Explorations have already been made in the field by Indian and Western scholars of eminence, and we may profit by a patient and dispassionate study of the results of their fruitful researches in the fourth volume of our Interpretations of the Bhāgavad-Gītā, to be entitled "Age of the Gītā and Origin of the Bhāgavata Religion", wherein we shall discuss the problems relating to the date of the Gītā and its relation to the Bhāgavata religion and its various phases, including Vaisnavism, Nārāyana-cult, Vāsudeva-worship etc., and consider the question of the historicity of Kṛṣṇa. Besides the opinions of two Western scholars, Hopkins and Garbe, who have made extensive researches on the Great Epic (Mahābhārata) and the Bhāgavad-Gītā respectively, the views of Telang, R. G. Bhandarkar, B. N. Seal, Subba Rao, C. R. Vaidya, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Tilak, S. N. Tattvabhusan, Hem Chandra Ray Choudhury, Radhakrishnan and S. N. Das Gupta who have thrown a flood of light on this vast field of historical and comparative studies, will come under consideration in Book IV which will also include the results of scholarly investigations into allied problems of the relation between the Gītā and Buddhism, between the Gītā and Christianity, between the Vedic and Brāhmaṇical Cultures and the Vaisnava religion and the Bhāgavata movement. It is after we shall have discussed these historical questions relating to the Back-ground of the Gītā that we shall be in a position to take up the subject of the Philosophy and Religion of the Gītā in the light of modern thought in Books V and VI of our series of Interpretations of the Gītā.

## ERRATA

### Page Line

- 15 17 —Insert "of" after 'modes'  
 24 9 —Read 'of' for 'on'  
 27 26 —Read 'Puruṣa' for 'Purasa'  
 37 15 —Read 'those' for 'these'  
 41 16 —Read 'ab' for 'ob' in 'obandoned'.  
 42 7 —Omit 'the' before 'force'.  
 47 5 —Read 'eighth' for 'eigth'  
 „ 22 —Omit 'd' from 'perceived'  
 „ 26 —Read 'also' for 'all'  
 79 4 —Read G XII for G IXII  
 „ 23 —Read e for a after p in 'temparament'.  
 80 1 —Read 'and' for 'of'  
 „ 13 —Read 'teachings' for 'techings'.  
 82 15-16 —Read S for s in supreme spirit  
 85 —Omit 78 (No of para)  
 92 1 —Read 'pairs' for 'pains'  
 „ 2 —Read 'sites' for 'sitions'.  
 98 17 —Read 's' for 'd' in reached.  
 99 Heading—Insert 'and' between 'Gita' and 'Socrates', and  
     Omit—  
 100 1 —Read s after t in 'concept'  
 103 7 —Read 'wrapped' for 'worpped'  
 108 11 —Read 'idea' for 'ideal'  
 111 3 —Insert s after o in 'posesseth'.  
 121 13 —Omit s in 'formers'.  
 127 11 —Read 'is' for 'as'  
 128 Heading of sub-section—Read 'Supremacy' for 'Super-  
     macy'  
 134 10 —Omit 'they' after 'matter'.  
 143 5 —Read 'unin' for 'uni' before 'fluenced'.  
 146 11 —Read 'as' for 'at'.  
 147 last line—Insert , after 'two'.

- 148 3 —Read 'man' for 'men'  
 160 12 —Omit 's' in doctrines  
 174 Heading of Sub-section—Read 'Panentheistic' for 'Pan-theistic'  
 175 11 & 13— —Ditto—  
 178 9 —Read XI th for X th  
 179 20 —Read a for e in 'rediating'  
 183 12 —Read 'or' for 'of' before 'if'  
 184 21 —Insert „ after 'bliss'  
 184 25 —Insert s after 'passage'  
 187 25 —Insert „ after 'affected'  
 212 Page number—Read 212 for 112  
 217 7 —Read 'Summum' for 'Sumnum'  
 221 21 —Read 'his' for 'His'.  
 „ 28 —Read 'a' for 'A' in Absorption  
 226 5 —read i for a in 'erudation'.  
 227 26 —Read a for o in 'Tioyi'  
 248 6 —Read a for o in 'nectoi'  
 248 28—Read g for p in 'propressive'  
 257 1 —Omit 'in' before 'the Gita'  
 261 29 —Insert „ after 'the same'  
 263 5 —Read ā for a before m in 'rasānam'  
 265 17 —Omit , after 'the Gītā'.  
 281 20 —Omit a after i in 'immortality'.  
 282 21 —Insert , after 'expression'.  
 284 19 —Read ā for a in rasānam'  
 289 16—Read a for e after mm in grammar.

# INDEX

—A—

- Abhyāsa—31
- Achyuta—248
- Actual—153, 245
- Ācārya Upāsanā—78
- Adhibhūta—125, 126, 235.
- Adhidaiva—125, 126 235
- Adhyajña—125, 126, 235
- Adhyātma—125, 126, 235
- Āditya—124, 178, 180, 256
- Advaitavāda—252
- Agni—181, 264, 288
- Ahankāra—269
- Ahimsā—256, 270
- Airāvata—124
- Akārtā—186
- Ākāsa—248
- Akṣara—261, 276
- Alexander—168
- Ananta—124
- Angirā—251.
- Aniruddha—254
- Ānanda—213.
- Aristotle—100, 103, 107, 122, 137, 147, 153, 223, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 274, 279
- Arjuna—37, 60, 61, 66, 67, 68, 71, 80, 83, 84, 125, 165, 178, 180, 181, 182, 221, 232, 239, 255, 256, 261, 266
- Aryamā—124

- Aryans (non-)—285, 287.
- Āranyakas—51, 239, 283, 284.
- Āśādhanā—37
- Āśīamas—51, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 121, 238, 249.
- Āśwaghosa—270.
- Aswathha—156, 157, 163, 176, 207, 245
- Āśvin—125, 178, 180.
- Asat—17, 97
- Asita—124.
- Asuras—180, 260, 264
- Atharva Veda—227, 240
- Atheistic—195
- Ātma-Yoga,—193
- Ātmā—143, 144, 263.
- Aum (also see OM)—72, 173, 199, 200
- Avatāra—232, 253, 255
- Avidyā—195, 264.
- Avyakta—267, 276
  

—B—

- Ballavāchāryya—285.
- Bankimchandra—7, 272, 290.
- Bādarāyana—185, 223, 224, 225, 273.
- Bānaprastha—76, 78.
- Bhagavān—255
- Bhāgavata—12, 233, 234, 246, 249, 253, 255, 256, 257, 264, 271, 272, 273, 276, 286, 287, 290

- Bhāgavata Purāna**—252, 253, 255, 284  
**Bhāgavatism**—250, 251, 252, 254, 258, 259, 270  
**Bhakta**—25, 57, 75, 277, 278  
**Bhakti**—247, 248, 249, 252, 253, 254, 262, 263, 264, 269, 270 (*Sāstras*), 278, 285  
**Bhāndārkar**—7, 49, 52, 80, 272, 290.  
**Bhārata**—259  
**Bhīṣma**—180, 181  
**Bṛhma**—124  
**Bibhu**—186  
**Bibhuti**—193, 228, 231, 232, (Also see *Vibhuti*)  
**Bosanquet**—3  
**Brahma**—17, 29, 42, 45, 47, 77, 84, 91, 94, 104, 106, 107, 125, 126, 133, 134, 136, 152, 163, 176, 184, 216 (*Savda*), 217, 218, 220, 221, 223, 226, 235  
**Brahmacharyya**—76, 78, 81  
**Brahmachārī**—43, 77, 109  
**Brahma-Chintan**—248  
**Brahmajñāna**—248, 249  
**Brahmasūtra**—7, 124, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 239, 249, 250, 251  
**Brahmavaivartta Purāna**—252, 253  
**Brahmavādīs**—17, 29  
**Brahma-vidyā**—234, 239, 283, 284  
**Brāhmaṇas**—23, 36, 60, 61, 119, 199, 239, 262, 271, 283, 284, 289  
**Briāhmanism and Brāhmanical**—20, 21, 22, 246, 259, 272, 286, 290  
**Brāhma Samāj**—37.  
**Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad**—77, 78, 82, 229, 249, 262, 263  
**Brhaspati**—124, 250, 251  
**Brndāban**—287, 289  
**Bruno**—137, 244  
**Buddha**—54, 122, 243, 253, 270 (*Chaitanya*), 271  
**Buddhi**—269  
**Buddhism & Buddhiust**—54, 254, 257, 260, 269, 270, 272, 273, 276, 285, 286, 288  
**C**—  
**Carlyle**—245  
**Cartesian**—155, 245  
**Chaitanya**—285  
**Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra**—290 (also see under *Bankim*)  
**Chhandas**—125  
**Chhāndogya Upanisad**—45, 77, 207, 228, 229, 240, 248, 249, 250, 255, 262, 263, 265, 270, 284, 289  
**Chitra Ratha**—124  
**Christ**—54, 270  
**Christendom**—107, 243  
**Christian**—54, 243, 247, 253, 269, 271, 273, 276  
**Christianity**—107, 270, 285  
**Comte**—247.

Cosmos—202.

Cousin, M—11

—D—

Daityas—124

Daivī sampat—274

Dānam—13, 259

Dānavas—177

Das Gupta, S N—272, 290

Deussen—77, 229

Devakī—228, 249, 255, 263,  
265, 289

Devas—124, 177

Devatā—124

Dhāma (Pāramam)—216

Dhanañjaya—255

Dharma—264, 265

Dharmāngas—248

Dhṛtarāṣṭra—180

Dhyāna—222

Divinity—20, 177

Drona—180, 181

Dualism—53, 146, 252

Dwāraka—289

—E—

Eckhert—122, 137, 243, 244

Ekānta—264, 265

Epic—66, 80, 126, 229, 230,  
231, 233, 234, 238, 239, 250,  
255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 264,  
265, 266, 272, 273, 283, 284

Ethical—95

Ethics—99

Eugenic—67

Europe & European—106, 137,  
242, 244, 247, 274

—F—

Fate—88

—G—

Gandharvas—124, 180.

Ganges—176.

Garbe—229, 234, 246, 247,  
250, 271, 272, 290

Gārhasthya—76

Gati (*Paramā*), (*Parā*), (*anut-*  
*tamā*), (*adhamā*)—216

Gauḍīya—285

Gauīāṅga—285, 287

Gāyatrī—125

Ghata Jātaka—270

Ghora (Āngirasa)—228, 249,  
250, 255, 263

Gitāñjali—283

Gopis—289

Grhastha—77

Green—100, 242, 274

Greek & Greece—85, 99, 100,  
103, 134, 242, 243, 274.

Gunas—27, 96, 142, 156, 157,  
206, 208, 210, 221, 224,  
260, 274

Gunātīta—75

—H—

Hamsa—253

Hari—193, 261, 266.

Harivamsa—284.

Heaven—85, 203, 204, 205  
 Hegel—137, 244, 274  
 Hell—85, 88, 203, 204, 205  
 Hem Chandra Roy Chowdhury—228, 270, 272, 290  
 Himālaya—124, 176.  
 Hindu and Hinduism—20, 21,  
   38, 74, 75, 79, 80, 83, 108,  
   114, 119, 120, 121, 137, 148,  
   160, 223, 229, 239, 287  
 Hopkins—126, 272, 290

## —I—

Idealism—95, 100  
 Ikṣvāku—234, 250  
 Igdrāsil—245  
 Indestructible—30  
 India and Indian—19, 28, 30,  
   50, 66, 69, 75, 79, 85, 99,  
   100, 111, 122, 124, 127, 128,  
   134, 137, 140, 146, 151, 157,  
   160, 166, 168, 172, 191, 194,  
   196, 197, 200, 202, 205, 220,  
   227, 238, 239, 240, 247, 253,  
   268, 270, 271, 275, 276, 283,  
   284, 290

Indianist—260

Indologists, Indological—223  
   290

Indra—264, 288

Indrīvāni—269

Isā Upanisad—229, 240, 262  
   264

Iswara Pranidhān—278

## —J—

Jaina—254, 285.  
 Jainism—270  
 Jābāla Upanisad—77  
 Jāhnavī—125  
 Janaka—215, 250, 262  
 Japa—125, 176  
 Jayadiatha—181  
 Jesus—122, 243,  
 Jewish—276  
 Jīva—261.  
 Jñāna—13, 130, 247, 262, 278,  
   287

Jñānī—75, 277

Judaism—285

## —K—

Kalkī—253, 255  
 Kāmadhuk—124  
 Kandarpa—124  
 Kant & Kantian—100, 104,  
   107, 122, 137, 142, 149, 155,  
   160, 190, 241, 242, 243, 244,  
   245, 274  
 Kapila—124, 185, 249  
 Karma—164, 218, 235, 287.  
 Karmakānda—285  
 Karmaśū kauśalam—279  
 Karma Yoga—13, 46 223.  
 Karini—75, 277  
 Karna—181  
 Katha Upanisad—77, 85, 148,  
   217, 219, 229, 230 240, 241,  
   250, 263, 264  
 Keith—77

- Kena Upaniṣad—229, 240, 263, 264  
 Kīrtan—38, 39  
 Krṣṇa (or Śree Kṛṣṇa)—6, 7, 12, 71, 80, 83, 84, 138, 165, 178, 182, 193, 200, 221, 223, 228, 232, 233, 234, 239, 240, 248, 249, 250, 253, 255, 257, 258, 260, 261, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 271, 273, 288, 289, 290.  
 Kṛṣṇa Dvāipāyana—7, 223, 273.  
 Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva—286  
 Kṛṣṇaism—285  
 Kṛṣṇaite—256, 267  
 Kṛtānta—222  
 Kṣara—276  
 Kṣattriyas—60, 61, 62, 84, 119, 203, 204, 262  
 Kuruites—233  
 Kurukṣetra—65, 80, 232, 233, 266
- L—
- Logos—149, 244  
 Loimser—271
- M—
- Macdonel—77  
 Macnicol—271  
 Mādhlva—223, 284  
 Mahat—150  
 Mahat Brahma—135, 156, 198, 223
- Maharṣi—124  
 Mahābhārata—6, 7, 11, 65, 126, 127, 182, 202, 225, 229, 233, 234, 239, 250, 251, 252, 253, 256, 257, 258, 266, 270, 272, 273, 284, 289  
 Mahātmās—206, 211, 215.  
 Maheśvara—144.  
 Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad—77.  
 Maitrī—256  
 Makāla—124, 176  
 Manas—269  
 Manes—205  
 Manu—76, 79, 81, 82, 83, 234, 238  
 Manus—124, 176.  
 Mārgaśīrsa—125  
 Marichi—124  
 Maiuts—124, 178  
 Mathurā—289  
 Max Müller—11, 217, 241.  
 Māyā—151, 158, 166, 185, 188, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 210, 237, 268  
 Meru—124  
 Mokṣa—17, 29  
 Monism—53, 146, 252  
 Mundaka Upaniṣad—77, 230, 234, 240, 250, 263.  
 Muni—75
- N—
- Nachiketa—219.  
 Nāma Kīrtan—38, 39.  
 Nanda—289

- Nārada—124  
 Nārāyaṇa and Nārāyanī—  
 234, 246, 248, 251, 254, 255,  
 256, 258, 261, 264, 265, 266,  
 270, 271, 272, 284, 289, 290  
 Nature—202, 245  
 Neo-Platonic—149, 244  
 Nimbārka—285  
 Nirvāna—42, 216, (Brahma)-  
 221, 269.  
 Nīti Śastra—251  
 Norwegian—157, 245  
 —O—  
 Odin—245.  
 Om—17, 29, 40, 125, 176, 248,  
 263.  
 —P—  
 Padam, (*Sāśwatam*), (*av)yā-  
 yam)—216  
 Pādana—256  
 Pañcharātra—252, 253, 254  
 284.  
 Pāndavas—180, 255, 269  
 Pānduites—233.  
 Panini—253, 289  
 Pantheism and Pantheistic  
 (also Panentheism)—30, 53,  
 146, 155, 168, 170 171, 172,  
 174, 175, 184, 245  
 Paramātmā—144, 145, 261  
 Parameswara—144, 145  
 Parā & Aparā—265  
 Paribrajyā (prabrajyā)78  
 Paribrājaka—77  
 Pārtha—193  
 Patañjali—185  
 Peterburgs Worteibuch—231.  
 Pitrs—124, 205  
 Plato—100, 103, 107, 241, 242,  
 243, 244, 274  
 Plotinus—122, 137, 243, 244  
 Potential—153, 245  
 Poussin—271  
 Pradyumna—254  
 Pīahlāda—124  
 Prakṛiti—27, 134, 142, 150, 159,  
 187, 201, 223, 244, 267, 269  
 Prasthānas—224, 267  
 Pratīk—247, 248  
 Prema—256  
 Preya—85  
 Purānas and Purānic—11, 21,  
 46, 48, 126, 225, 230, 231,  
 238, 251, 252, 253, 261, 264,  
 265, 283, 284, 286, 289  
 Purusa—27, 133, 136, 142, 144,  
 159, 198, 201, 244, 261, 267,  
 268, (Parama, Divya)—216  
 Purusottama—22, 194, 276  
 Purva Mīmamsā—285  
 —R—  
 Rādhā Śyām—284  
 Rādhākrishnan—240, 272, 290,  
 Rajas—15, 17, 90, 96, 115, 134,  
 136, 148, 160, 162, 166, 192,  
 208, 221.  
 Rājarsis—262  
 Rājasika—90*

- Rāksasa—15, 124, 260  
 Rāma—124, 248, 261  
 Rāmānuja—223, 252, 284  
 Reality, Ultimate—199  
 Roman—285  
 R̄ṣis—42, 100, 124, 133, 137,  
     138, 146, 151, 166, 167, 176,  
     177, 179, 200, 217, 223, 224  
     226, 227, 234, 250  
 Rudra—124, 178, 180, 248,  
     256
- S—
- Saddharma Pundarika—270,  
 Sādharmya—216  
 Sādhyas—180  
 Saguna—247, 248  
 Šaivism—257, 287  
 Samadarśana—279  
 Samatva—278  
 Sāma Veda—125, 176, 227,  
     228, 229, 230, 240, 284  
 Samhitās—224  
 Sanas—284  
 Sāndilya Sūtra—252, 284  
 Sañjaya—6  
 Sankara—223, 256, 269  
 Sāṅkhya—29, 78, 84, 88, 124,  
     144, 148, 149, 150, 156, 159,  
     195, 196, 199, 201, 202,  
     220, 222, 226, 227, 229, 230,  
     246, 249, 267, 269, 273  
 Sāṅkhya (Seswara)—202.  
 Sannyāsa—29, 78, 80, 81, 82,  
     269
- Sannyāsi—75, 77  
 Sānti—213  
 Sāntiniketan—283  
 Sat—17, 72, 97, 199, 200  
 Sattva—15, 17, 90, 96, 98, 136,  
     160, 162, 166, 221.  
 Sāttvata—254, 255, 264  
 Sāttvik—90, 134  
 Scriptures—72, 94  
 Seal, B N—160, 253, 269, 270,  
     272, 290  
 Senart—254, 271  
 Siddhas—180  
 Siddhi—213, 215  
 Sidgwick—100, 242, 274  
 Šiva—260, 261.  
 Skanda—124  
 Smṛti—239, 249  
 Socrates & Socractic—99, 100,  
     122, 132, 137, 241, 242, 243,  
     244, 274  
 Soma—158, 172  
 Sohamam—261  
 Spence, Herbert—1  
 Spinoza—107, 135, 137, 155,  
     179 241, 243, 244, 245  
 Sraddhā—16  
 Siāddha—68.  
 Sreyā—85, (Param), 216  
 Šruti—224  
 Sthānam (Šāśwatam), (ādyam  
     paramam)—216  
 Sthitaprajña—75, 91.  
 Stoic—106, 242  
 Subba Rao—272, 290

Sudra—36, 61, 119, 262, 276

Suka—253

Sukha—213

Summum Bonum—202, ,203,  
209, 217, 220, 221

Suta—180

Svarga—203

Sveta Dvīpa—253, 289

Svetāswatara Upanisad—230,  
240, 250, 263, 264

Swabhāva—235

Swādhyaya—22

—T—

Tagore, Dwijendranath—160

Tagore, Rabindranath—283

Tamas—15, 17, 90, 96, 115,  
134, 136, 160, 162, 166, 208,  
221

Tāmasik—90

Tapas—13, 259

Tapaswin—75

Tapobana—51

Tarpana—68,

Tat—17, 29, 72, 199, 200, 211,

Tattvabhushan—272, 290

Telang—11, 76, 241, 272, 290  
Theism & Theristic—30, 53,  
146, 168, 169, 170, 172, 183,  
194, 195, 201, 202

Tilak—7, 225, 226, 234, 246,  
247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252,  
253, 254, 255, 272, 290

Timanmigration, 205.

Timur—197

Tāngi—75

—U—

Udgītha—263, 284

Unmanifest, Unmanifested—  
30, 152, 153, 197, 198, 200,  
201

Upanisads & Upanisadic—11,  
39, 45, 46, 49, 51, 53, 54,  
77 80, 81, 82, 100, 107,  
126, 127, 138, 140, 143, 146,  
171, 191, 199, 200, 201, 203,  
207, 217, 218, 220, 223, 224,  
226, 227, 229, 230, 231,  
233, 234, 238, 239, 240, 241,  
243, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251,  
254, 255, 256, 258, 259, 261,  
262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 271,  
272, 283, 285, 286, 288, 289

Upāsanā—284

Usana—124

Uttama Puriusa—261

—V—

Vaidya—272, 290

Vainateya—124

Vairāgya—247

Vaiśyas—36, 61, 119, 262

Vaiṣnava & Vaiṣnavism—182,  
234, 252, 255, 256, 257, 258,  
259, 265, 266, 267, 268 269,  
270, 272, 273, 284, 285, 286,  
287, 288, 290

Vaiṣnavic—169

Vaiṇas—65, 74, 76, 249

Vaiuna—124, 288

Vasu—124 -

Vasudeva—254, 289

Vāsava—121

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Vāsudeva—173, 232, 248, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 260, 264, 265, 269, 270, 284, 289</p> <p>Vāyu—181, 264</p> <p>Vedas and Vedic—6, 7, 36, 47, 51, 53, 64, 77, 124, 125, 130, 133, 140, 156, 157, 165, 172, 205, 206, 223, 224, 227, 228, 173, 176, 182, 199, 204, 229, 230, 231, 237, 239, 240, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 256, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290</p> <p>Veda Vyāsa—6, 7, 273</p> <p>Vedānta &amp; Vedāntic—22, 124, 140, 143, 151, 158, 166, 172, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229, 230, 238, 246, 249, 250, 267, 269, 273, 285</p> <p>Vedānta Sūtras—201, 224, 239</p> <p>Vedāntakṛt—223</p> <p>Vedavit—223</p> <p>Vibhuti—19, 248, 254, 255, 256, 260, 262</p> <p>Vidyas—125, 264</p> <p>Visvarūpa—37, 248</p> <p>Viswe—125, 180</p> <p>Visista—252</p> <p>Vīruṇi—124, 180, 218, 220, 248, 252, 253, 255, 256, 257, 258, 260, 261, 265, 269</p> <p>Visnu Purāna—284</p> <p>Viṣṇuswāmī—285</p> <p>Vivasvān—234</p> <p>Vṛṣṇi—232, 248, 254, 255, 256, 264</p> | <p>Vyakta—247, 248, 276.</p> <p>Vyāsa—124</p> <p>Vyuhas—265, 269</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Y—</p> <p>Yādava, Yadu (Also Jādava)—182, 255, 265</p> <p>Yajña, different kinds of—13, 14, 15, 125, 259</p> <p>Yajñi Veda—240</p> <p>Yājñavalkya—78, 122, 243, 263,</p> <p>Yaksas—15, 124, 180</p> <p>Yama—124, 181, 219</p> <p>Yati—76, 77, 78, 81.</p> <p>Yoga—27, 29, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 52, 53, 78, 79, 84, 85, 87, 94, 103, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 115, 124, 129, 130, 131, 133, 144, 147, 154, 163, 170, 182, 185, 187, 188, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 206, 210, 214, 216, 220, 222, 223, 226, 227, 230, 234, 239, 246, 247, 248, 250, 263, 264, 267, 268, 273, 278, 279, 285, 287</p> <p>Yoga-Śāstra—195, 277, 278</p> <p>Yoga-sūtras—202</p> <p>Yogeśwara—193</p> <p>Yogi—11, 23, 25, 40, 41, 75, 77, 92, 103, 184, 106, 107, 109, 110, 112, 113, 119, 121, 129, 130, 131, 140, 147, 206, 207, 211, 213, 214, 236, 274, 277, 278, 279</p> |
|---|---|



## REVIEWS

Extracts from the Opinions and Reviews on "The Bhagavad-Gītā and Modern Scholarship" Book I of the series of "Interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gītā" by Mr. S. C. Roy, retired Director of Public Instruction, Assam, (Luzac & Co ).

1. Luzac's Oriental List & Book Review (London), (January - to - March, 1943).
  2. The Border Telegraph (Edinburgh) (the 5th January 1943)
  3. The Gateway (Autumn 1942)
  4. Review of Religions (Columbia University) (November 1942)
  5. The New Review (December 1942)
  6. Vedanta Kesari (January 1943)
  7. The Modern Review (January 1943).
  8. Sree Bhāratī (The Indian Research Institute) (Translated from Bengali into English)
  9. The Prabuddha Bhārata (July, 1943)
  10. The Theological Forum (July, 1943)
- 

### (1) LUZAC'S ORIENTAL LIST AND BOOK REVIEW (January - to - March, 1943), London

"The Bhagavad-Gita and Modern Scholarship" By S C Roy, M.A (London), I E S Luzac & Co Price 10s 6d cloth, stiff covers, 7s 6d

Book I—Theories of Interpolation

Book II—The Gita and its Background (Not yet published)

Book III—Teachings of the Gita in the light of Modern Thought (Not yet published)

On page X the author promises for the near future a book under the programmatic title "Unity of Indian and European Thought" and he asserts that "the last book on the philosophy and religion of the Gita can not be published before his sys-

## REVIEWS

matic standpoint is fully expounded in this future work". In the present book I of his interpretations of the Gita his methodical outlook is already clearly to be seen On 263 pages he provides a detailed exposition of all recent Indian and Western Researches on this sacred book of the Hindus In true Indian fashion he proceeds by a kind of *samvada*, a discussion of all possible stand-points by refuting the views of the others he makes room for his own original interpretation The problems are clearly stated He investigates the question of the unity and yet historical development of the Mahabharata and specially of its philosophical centrepiece, the Gita Though Mr Roy considers the Gita as sacred as the Bible and on page 253 even ventures to appoiton to it "a higher level than Buddha, Jesus, Muhammed and such other founders and prophets of other religions", he throughout his book tries to provide an objective and undevotional account of the interpretations given by Eastern and Western scholars Thus he admits the possibility of interpolation, of historical layers and of intermixture of *śruti* and *smṛti*, revelation and tradition For the main tenet of the Gita, however, he claims the holiness of *śruti* and asserts its Upanishadic origin

Mr Roy succeeds in giving convincing scholarly reasons for his assumption that the Gita does not belong to the later sectarian literature Equally well he advocates the standpoint that the intermixture of pantheistic and monotheistic teachings in the Gita may be explained from the characteristically Indian gift of welding together apparently divergent elements *Paramarthikas* (exoterically) the super personal view is taken, while *laukika* (exoterically), for the understanding of the masses, a single theistic form may be at the same time propagated The author provides further an original view as to how the apparently anti-vedic statements of the Gita can be reconciled with the orthodox Vedic concepts On page 216 he explains that the gross early Vedic idea of sacrifice has been gradually elevated and purified and may now be confronted with the more spiritualis-

## REVIEWS

ed forms of devotion to the Divine. By acknowledging necessary historical changes within the thought even of his sacred texts Mr Roy does not debar himself from visualising important developments within the Vedic concepts of Bhakti, Māyā, Yoga, etc.

Thus the author provides in his psychology, in his method and in his single interpretations a valuable contribution to the far-reaching problem of East and West.

BETTY HEIMANN

(2) THE BORDER TELEGRAPH (the 5th January 1948)  
Edinburgh

In connection with Indian studies, or Indology, it is doubtful whether any more useful and, more important, work has been done than is now being accomplished by Mr S C Roy, MA, with his monumental work entitled "Interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gita" which is now in course of publication. A better or more appropriate introduction to this great work can scarcely be conceived. A comprehensive and systematic conspectus of the result of previous researches on the Gita and the Mahabharata has long been overdue, but now that it has been undertaken by Mr Roy, there can be no dissent of opinion as regards its having been accomplished. With "Theories of Interpolations in the Gita", he proceeds to consideration of "The Gita and the great Epic of India", and the "Gita and the Bhagavata Religion", and he concludes the latter with a summary of all the Positive Results of the whole of Book I. Every student of this science, now called Indology, will find this publication a "sine qua non". Book I is to be followed by other two volumes respectively entitled "The Bhagavad Gita and its Background" and "Interpretation of the Gita in the Light of Modern Thought", there is much scope for thought and discussion in the volume now before us.

(3) THE GATEWAY (Autumn, 1942).

This volume will serve a very useful purpose since it consi-

(C)

## REVIEWS

ders in turn the principal interpretations of the Gita both by Western and Indian scholars. The author says : "The present volume is the first attempt at a comprehensive and systematic review of the results of researches on the Gita and the Epic Mahabharata, made during the last three quarters of a century by such competent scholars of the west as MaxMuller, Hopkins, Barth Wilhelm von Humboldt, Weber, Holzmann Dalhmann, Schroder, Deussen Garbe Winternitz Macnicol and others, as well as by eminent Indian scholars like Bhandarkar Bankimchandra, Telang, Tilak Subba Rao Vaidya and others. The work has been brought up-to-date by inclusion of the fruits of labours of two great historians of Indian Philosophy viz., Prof Radhakrishnan and Dr. Surendra Nath Das Gupta, although the major portion of the present volume was prepared before the publication of these two great works on Indian Philosophy." The author has had a broad career in academic and educational circles in India.

### (4) REVIEW OF RELIGIONS (November 1942) (Columbia University).

This book leads back to the heyday of controversy on the origin composition and meaning of the Bhagavad-Gita.. Its first part, in fact, was written twentyfive years ago ; the present volume moreover, is only meant to be an introduction to the study of the Gita to be followed by two more volumes to be named "The Bhagavad-Gita and its Background" and "Interpretation of the Gita in the light of Modern Thought". ..this extensive research of so many earlier interpretations of Western and Indian scholars is justified by the intrinsic complexity of its subject matter, and should prove a useful survey of the painstaking labour devoted to the Hindu gospel since the beginnings of Indic studies.

He denies the assumed clash between pantheistic and theistic views in the Gita and refutes the claim that Gita should be taken as a sectarian text of the Bhagavatas Emphasizing the

REVIEWS

Upanishadic origin of the teachings of the Gita, he discusses the orthodox Hindu view of the sectarian origin of the Maha-bharata and the Gita as well. In this respect the chapters on the relation of the Gita to the Nārāyaṇa cult, based on a comprehensive analysis of the Gita and the Nārāyaṇa section in Moksadharma, and on its relation to later Kṛṣṇa cult and Bhakti as well, are of special interest.

HENRY R ZIMMER,

(December 1942).

(5) THE NEW REVIEW

The Gita inspite of its apparent simplicity is one of the deepest books in existence, which is no wonder since it sums up and syncretizes the Hindu darsans in their period of formation or elucidation. The more books about it the better, provided they increase our understanding of it, which is what these two volumes certainly do.

Mr Roy's book is distinctly meant for scholars. Its object is to discuss once more in the light of modern research the puzzling problem of the character and composition of the Gita. Three main questions are dealt with, leading of course to a number of subsidiary queries. Is the Gita an interpolation, a ready-made poem, bodily inserted into their epic (Bhāgavata) poem? If there has been interpolation, which part of the Gita as we now read it, belongs to the inserted poem, and which to the later epic?

The plain answer which is given to the second question should, we believe, rid us once for all of the idea, so blindly accepted by many as evident, that the Gita can be placed on the same level as say the Narāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa, but the tone is very different. To the first question the author answers as follows. It seems very probable that in the original Epic there was short discussion as to the propriety of killing one's kith and kin in battle, and an exhortation to the Kṣatriyas on the duty of fighting with a faith in the future life and in the immortality of the

(E)

## REVIEWS

soul, as Holzmann suggests and it is on the basis of these discussions and exhortations that the original Gita-Upanisad was remodelled, and inserted in the Epic by the interpolators exactly at the place where the Gita section begins in the present Mahabharata (P 151)

The theory is therefore that there has been interpolation. So far I think, everyone will agree. The part interpolated was an Upanisad. This is certainly the Indian tradition, and considering the number and variety of the recognised Upanisad, we have no reason whatever to deny it. Finally the Upanisad was easily tagged on the epic owing to the fact that the epic itself, by discussing the legitimacy of warfare, gave to the interpolators a splendid chance of inserting it, for the Upanisad went much more deeply into the problem of life and death than the epic itself could have done. With this again we have no cause to disagree. It is all very probable and very ably argued.

The author generously promises us three other books on the Gita. We hope that his promise will be held and soon.

### (6) VEDANTA KESARI (January 1943)

Mi Roy has projected a catena of three volumes on the Gita bearing the titles, Bhagavad Gita and modern scholarship, The Bhagavad-Gita and its Background, and Interpretations of the Gita in the light of Modern Thought, or as stated in P 25 "Teachings of the Gita". The first one is before us, the rest are to be published. The published volumes purports to present a comprehensive and systematic review of the results of researches on the Gita and Epic Mahabharata conducted by Eastern and Western Indologists of note for about a century.

The author adopts the stand of a historical critic and aims 'at a study of the Gita on a rational-comparative basis, utilising the result of researches made by modern scholars'. He has his own fears that the method is somewhat 'critical and negative' and 'result destructive', yet he hopes to demonstrate by his 'dispassionate and disinterested investigation' that 'the teachings of

the Gita are not associated with any particular school of philosophy, but present in a nutshell the quintessence of a rational, liberal and universalistic and spiritualistic culture — the one scripture that holds together and synthesizes the finest and noblest elements of Indo-British culture and Euro-Asian civilization." Several decades back Richard Garbe, a German Orientalist launched the theory that the original Gita was a product of Bhāgavata religion based on Sāṅkhyā-Yoga philosophy. Garbe had to leave out from the existing well known Gita 134 verses as later interpolations, for he believed that the frame of the Gita is purely Sāṅkhyā, and that therefore Vedāntic or Vedic references must be foreign to it. Mī Roy says, 'Garbe's long occupation with the Sāṅkhyā philosophy might have generated in his mind a psychological illusion, owing to which he saw every philosophical teaching in other texts or systems as coloured by Sāṅkhyā.' The theory of Interpolation in the Gita as set forth by Garbe is here proved to be entirely without foundation, with much critical reasoning. In Garbe's view the Gita verses that refer to the impersonal Godhead (or Pantheism) are not compatible with the personal conception of God (theism) and therefore are to be considered as later additions. Our author points out that this is an error on the part of Garbe who confounded Indian theism with Christian Deism, for in India, as Mī Roy pointedly puts, the distinction of Pantheism and Theism does not involve necessarily a separation. Again Garbe's assumption that the Gita contains philosophical contradictions is shown to be the result of mere imagination or want of higher critical judgment and deeper spiritual insight. Garbe's attempt to discover defects in all these details of the Gita, says the present book, 'proves his own narrowness and one-sidedness and misguided and perverted scholarly enthusiasm'. Garbe's book is at present known only to researchers who often deal in learned trash, and it need not disturb the Gita student. Having refuted the views of Garbe in the first part of the book *in extenso* Mī Roy attempts a critical study of the origin -

(G)

. REVIEWS

nature of the Mahabharata and the position of the Bhagavad-Gita in the second part. After a scientific examination of the evidence gathered by the previous scholars and by himself the present writer arrives at the conclusion that the great Epic is 'a heterogeneous mixture of elements which were at first independent of each other but were all later on combined more or less into a systematic whole with a definite purpose'. The Gita, it is stated here is such a sublime and beautiful poem that it attracted 'notice of the learned interpolators as providing a suitable opportunity for the application of their editorial skill' and they worked it out into the framework of the great epic. Gita is a pre-epic Upanisadic treatise 'foreign to the Epic Mahabharata in every respect', it does not fit in with its surroundings and is an interrupting digression causing a break in the context. In the way of establishing such a thesis the more formidable opposition comes from Lokamanya Tilak who held that 'the Gita is not an interpolation as it is inserted in the Epic in the right place on the right occasion and on the right grounds'. So the views expressed in the Gitārahasya are now examined at length and set aside with the author's own reasons. The writer of our book has pointed out with skill that Tilak's position is untenable and contradictory. On page 90 we read 'Mr Tilak could not free himself from the old traditions of regarding the Mahābhārata as a unitary whole and was blinded by prejudice that there were no additions and interpolations made in the Mahābhārata.'

The traditional students of the Gita will plainly accept that the Gita is essentially Upanishadic and its teachings is meant for all time and for the whole humanity though the immediate occasion that evoked Gita was Arjuna's need. This is what is implied by the verse which gives the allegory of the cow and calf. The object of the poet of the Gita was not to induce Arjuna to engage himself in war an unworthy end' in the view of M. Roy but to teach humanity its duty and to promote spiritual culture. Nobody would question the part of the pro-

## REVIEWS

position. The third and the concluding part of Mr. Roy's book deals with the relation which the Gita bears to the Bhagavata religion. Mr. Roy thinks that the author of the Gita was a Rsi, a great poetic Genius, well-versed in Vedic cultures.

The Krishna of the Bhagavata is disclosed to us without any bias or prejudice to be 'the leader of the youth movement among the pastoral tribes of Brindaban' who with his friends engaged himself in 'rural welfare works like purifying and cleaning the tank that supplied water for drinking, and killing snakes and cranes and other pests'. Thanks to historical criticism, that we are to-day in possession of such new knowledge. The poet-philosopher of the Gita too was evidently a reformer of the religious and social life of contemporary Vedic and Non-Vedic Aryans, and hence it is contended that 'his attitude towards the Vedic rites and ceremonies of sacrificial religion and worship of many Gods was one of protest and revolt' and that his attitude towards ascetic practices away from the worldly life of family and social ties was equally characterised by a spirit of disapproval and disavowal.'

\* \* \*

Mr. Roy's daring book affords useful reading to historical students interested in the study of the great Epic and of the Gita.

### (7) THE MODERN REVIEW (January 1948)

In this book the learned author has very carefully surveyed the wide field of indological researches of the Gita and discussed the views of eminent scholars both ancient and modern, who have approached and studied this Bible of the Hindus. The author has very ably interpreted the root origin of the Gita in the light of modern thought. According to him the philosophical background of the Gita is taken from Upanishads, which is a very sound view. The Epic compilers of the Mahabharata have repeatedly mentioned the Gita as an Upanishad sung by the Lord (Bhagavad-Gitasu-Upanishadsu) at the end of each chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

## REVIEWS

The author of the Gita presented to the world a poetic synthesis of the Upanishadic thoughts. In fact, the Gita is the first attempt at systematization of the truths of the Upanishads. The poet-philosopher of the Gita continues the evolution of the thought of Upanishads and enriches the philosophy and religion of the Vedic traditions with his deeper insight as well as with his experiences of other cultures of his time. Although there might be some resemblance and similarity between the Gita and the Nārāyaṇiya Dharma, still it might be maintained that the Gita is an authoritative text-book of spiritual monotheism based on a harmony of the Vedanta, Sankhya, and Yoga modes of ethical and philosophical discipline before the Nārāyaṇiya section of the Epic Mahabharata was composed by an advocate of the Bhagavat religion. The learned author is right in holding that the Gita was originally a non-sectarian Upanishad. The teachings of the Gita are universal and eternal truths which transcend all limitations of space and time. Dr S Subramania Aye in his 'Introduction to Sri Bhagavad-Gita Bhashya' by Sri Hamsa Yogi says—"Gita was a compilation made when the Mahabharata was written with the aid of the materials which came to author's hand through his own disciple Sañjaya, who apparently was commissioned by his Master to gather all materials ready for compilation though he does so without interfering with epic setting given to it in the work". It is satisfactory to note that this fits in exactly with the view expressed by the learned author in the book under review, viz., 'that the Gita was a later interpolation in the body of the Epic by a Bhagavata editor, who may have, to some extent, revised the episode so inserted in order to fit it into the epic surroundings as well as to promote his sectarian propaganda'.

We anxiously await the publication of the author's other companion volumes and heartily recommend this book for the deep perusal and reverential study of all Gita scholars.

JITENDRA NATH BOSE

(J)

## REVIEWS

(8) SRI BHĀRATI (The Indian Research Institute)  
(Translated from Bengali into English)

The book under review is the product of Mr S C Roy's long researches on the Gita. It publishes a part of the conclusions arrived at by the author after his scholarly investigations into the findings of savants of the east and west on the Gita during the last 25 years. He proposes to complete his work in three volumes, of which the present is the first. The second book is in the press and will soon be published from Calcutta. We are struck by the scholarship of the author on perusal of this book. One feels surprised at the variety of opinions surveyed on the subject of the Gita within a short compass of a little more than 250 pages. The book is not a review of the various commentaries on the Gita. But it is a detailed criticism or appreciation of the viewpoints of Western scholars like Garbe, Hopkins, Barth, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Deussen and others and of the opinions held by the orientalist thinkers of our country like Bhandarkar, Bankimchandra, Telang, Tilak and others. So the treatment may be regarded as historical rather than critical. The Western scholars do not hold the same opinion of the Gita. Some view the Gita as an interpolation in the Mahabharata, according to others the Gita is a part of the original Mahabharata and not interpolated therein. Among the oriental scholars too, there are two such schools. The Sanskritist Pandits of our country do not accept the theory of interpolation. The author has given due consideration to all these opinions in his review. In his view the Gita is a work of universally acceptable teachings, being neither a *smṛti Prasṭhana* of the three prasthanas of the Vedanta school, nor a religious text book of the Vaishanava doctrines preached by Lord (Bhagavan) Sree Krishna. The Gita is a unique and unprecedented book of harmony or reconciliation of all the conflicting theories of salvation prevalent in the age when this song was composed. It was originally an Upanishad of distinction which

(K)

## REVIEWS

was grafted into the Epic Mahabharata at a subsequent age. The author concludes that it was composed at the time of the Katha Upanishad. He has advanced many cogent arguments showing profound scholarship on the subject, he has also placed under special review the opinions of Western scholars. We shall look forward to the other volumes of the work.

Finally we desire to suggest that a Bengali version of such a book is indispensably necessary.

One word more, if the Gita was an Upanishad like the Katha and other Upanishads, as mentioned at the end of every chapter of the Gita (e.g., thus ends in the Upanishad sung by the Lord in the Mahabharata of 1,00,000 verses) then under which Veda and as part of which Brāhmaṇa it is to be placed? We hope the author will try to offer a solution for this in the next volume. We wish the book a wide publicity.

Nalini Behari Sāmkhya-Vedāntatītha

### (9) THE PRABUDDHA BHARATA, July 1943

This is the first of a series of three volumes—the other two to be published later are The Bhagavad-Gita and its Background and Interpretation of the Gita in the Light of Modern Thought—in which the author intends, in the light of his own researches, to determine the origin, composition, background, and meaning of the Bhagavad-Gita. The first volume under review embodies the author's views on the origin and composition of the Gita, which he develops by way of a critical survey of the results of earlier researches on the Gita made by Indologists both Western and Indian, since the beginning of Indic studies.

Some of the notable conclusions arrived at by the author, that mark the book out as a distinct work of original research may be noted as follows—

The Gita is not associated with any sectarian creed like Vaishnavism or sectarian god like Krishna or Vishnu. It is neither a product of the Narayaniya cult or the Bhagavata

(L)

## REVIEWS

movement It is a much earlier work than the Bhagavata episode in the Mokshadharma section of the Mahabharata and differs substantially in its teachings from the latter.

The author had the distinct advantage over his predecessors in the field in forming, in some respects, a maturer perspective on the genesis and background of the Bhagavad Gita as he could evaluate on a rational comparative basis the results of researches so far made, and come to his own conclusions His refutation of the Bhagavata origin of the Gita, contrary to the views of most of the Indian scholars, may mark a departure from the old outlook The non sectarian character of the Bhagavat-Gita which has substantially maintained its original forms all through, is borne out by the fact that, like the Upanishads its authority has been accepted without reserve by the monistic and dualistic schools of ancient and mediaeval India Another cogent reason which has led the author to reject the Bhagavata origin of the Gita is the total absence in it of the Vyuha doctrine which is one of the fundamental tenets of the Bhagavata religion The Bhagavatas may have drawn inspiration from the Gita as many other sects have done, but it does not necessarily follow that it owes its origin to their sect

*The book is a scholarly production The learned author has brought to bear upon his subject the vast scholarship and critical judgement that he is endowed with, and every statement that he has made has been supported by extensive arguments The book will throw new light on the history of the origin and growth of the great epic and the Bhagavat-Gita and their mutual relation*

(Italics are ours)

### (10) THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM

This First book of a three-volume study of the Gita is a detailed and comprehensive survey of extensive research into the origin, character, authorship, and present status of this gem of Hindu thought

Professor Roy considers The Gita the root and the flower and the fruit of the ancient Vedic and Upanishadic culture, and

## REVIEWS

believes that an all-inclusive study of it "is sure to throw a flood of light on the History of Indian thought and culture in general and on the development of religious life and philosophical genius of the Hindus in particular." So, in a spirit of impartiality and without prejudice of orthodoxy, he has set out to institute just such a study.

The English translation used is that of the late Annie Besant, with certain corrections and modifications, and with occasional reference to the translations of Telang and Tattvabhusan the author has made his own translations from German texts.

The book is divided into three parts dealing with Theories of interpolations in the Gita, the Gita and the great Epic of India, and the Gita and the Bhagavata Religion, respectively. In each part analytical consideration is given to the results of the work of eminent scholars of India and Europe during the last seventy-five years.

That the finest minds of the East such as Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Bankimchandra, K. T. Telang, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subba Rao, C. V. Vaidya, Professor Radhakrishnan, and Dr. Surendra Nath Das Gupta, should value the Gita is quite naturally to be expected, what is most interesting and certainly very encouraging, is the number of Western scholars who have been attracted to this field of Indology. Among these we note Max Müller, Edward Hopkins, Barth, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Welcker, Paul Deussen to whom this book is dedicated, Joseph Dalhmann, Adolf Holzmann, Richard Garbe, Lepold von Schroder, Winteritz, and Dr. Macnicol.

The opinions of some of these scholars as to the genesis and character of the Mahabharata and the relationship of the whole Epic to its parts, especially to the Bhagavad-Gita, differ radically, and with this divergence in view Prof. Roy formulates six questions as the foundation for his review of the subject.  
*These are the questions*

1. Can we speak of the original Epic as distinguished from the present Mahabharata?

- 2 Is the Gita an integral part of the Epic?
- 3 What is the character of the present Mahabharata and the relation between its historical narrative and didactic-religious parts?
- 4 Can the present Epic be treated as a unitary whole?
- 5 What is the genetic-historical relation between the Epic and the didactic Mahabharata, with special reference to the Bhagavad Gita?
- 6 What was the original form of the Bhagavad-Gita? Can it be treated as an Upanishadic treatise independent of the Epic relations?

With the utmost justice and scholarly insight the views of the principal scholars of the Gita are analysed on the basis of these questions and Professor Roy's conclusions — which incidentally coincide in general with those held by Theosophists — may be summarized categorically as follows

- 1 That an original Epic preceded the present Mahabharata
- 2 That this original Epic probably contained a section similar to the present Bhagavad-Gita and that that Gita episode originally existed as an independent Upanishad
- 3 That the Mahabharata is a miscellaneous collection of heterogeneous materials which may be grouped under two main headings, i.e., narrative tales, legends of myth and history, on the one hand, and didactic, moral, religious and philosophical episodes, on the other
- 4 And therefore the Mahabharata can not be considered as a unitary whole
- 5 That the genesis and growth of the Epic must have covered a long period and the Gita and other episodes must have been inserted at different stages in the evolution of the Mahabharata
- 6 That the Gita teachings may be traced back to their root in the old Upanishads, and the author of the Gita was most certainly versed not only in Vedic and Upanishadic principles

but was acquainted with the extra-Vedic and non-Aryan culture of his age.

Of this poet philosopher of the Gita, and the religious and intellectual environment in which he lived, we are to hear more in Professor Roy's second volume, "The Gita and its Background", while in his third volume, "Teachings of the Gita", may we hope to find T Subba Row's "Notes on the BHAGAVAD-GITA" and W Q Judge's recension "THE BHAGAVAD-GITA" the book of Devotion, given worthy consideration.

Finally, because they so adequately express what every lover of the Gita feels, but especially to show that nowhere in his pages of analytical and comparative discussion of the subject has the author lost sight of the intrinsic moral and ethical appeal of the Song Divine, we quote one of Prof Roy's descriptions of The Gita

"It will appear to a dispassionate and disinterested reader of this sacred poem that its teachings are characterized by rationality, spirituality, catholicity, universality and a spirit of liberalism — features and qualities that are rarely combined within a small compass so beautifully in any other text of the world-literature. It is perhaps the only religious-philosophical poem that has the unique character of comprehending, harmonizing, synthesizing and reconciling all conflicting claims and interests of knowledge and feeling, of duty and desire, of wisdom and action, of ethics philosophy and religion. It is this character of combining a sound system of liberal education and culture with faith and devotion of spiritual life, laying stress on an all-round development of the body, mind and spirit, on all-sided perfection in knowledge, love and disinterested performance of duty, that has made the Gita a universal scripture for all sects of Hindus as well as a unique treasure-house of truths on the ideal of spiritual life in its realization, not only for the civilized nations of the world, but for all the races of mankind."

(p. 250).

I. R. PONSONBY.

